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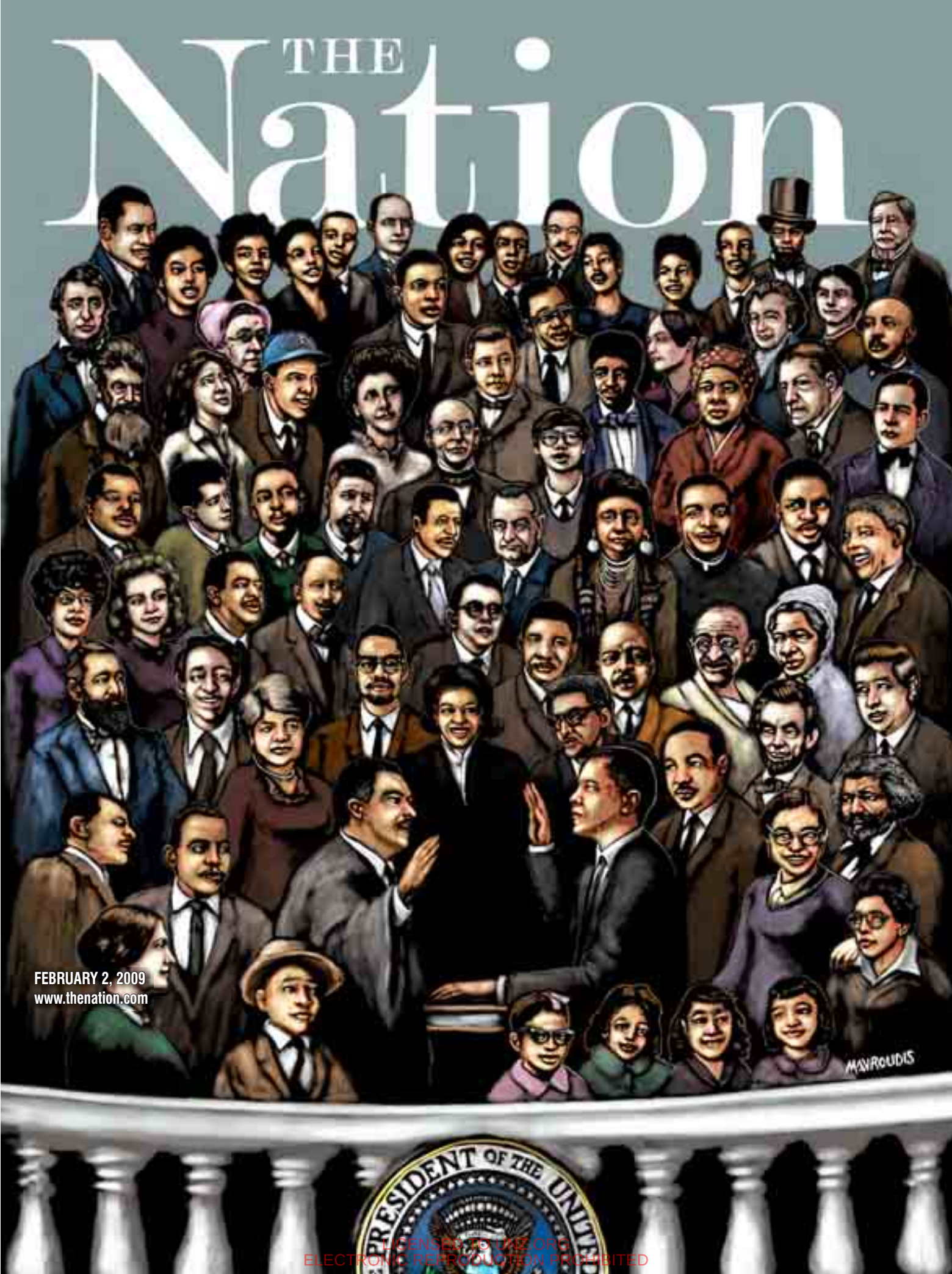

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Letters

Obama: Flexible, Intelligent, Pragmatic

Trenton, N.J.
Christopher Hayes's "The Pragmatist" [Dec. 29] is right on target in suggesting a link between Obama's pragmatism and the tradition in American philosophy of William James and John Dewey. The word "pragmatism" is often used to mean abandoning principles for short-term gains or not rocking the boat too much, but these interpretations miss the point of the pragmatic philosophers. The essential message of the American pragmatists was, as Hayes aptly puts it, "openness to the possibility of radical solutions." In my philosophy classes at Rider University, I teach James and Dewey as original and flexible thinkers who boldly challenged prevailing ideas. I hope that Obama will continue this great American tradition.
Carol Nicholson

Las Vegas
Christopher Hayes's analysis would benefit from two additional points: (1) Citing Abraham Lincoln's famous letter to Horace Greeley—"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it"—is fine. But by the time he wrote it, in August 1862, he had already drafted an emancipation proclamation; his cabinet had persuaded him to delay it until the Union had won a victory so that it would not be, as Secretary of State William Henry Seward put it, "our last shriek, on the retreat." Lincoln's letter to Greeley was designed in part to warn those opposed to emancipation that such a proclamation might be in the offing.

(2) Lyndon Johnson is not usually a favorite for liberals to quote; but when he was asked about his greatest accomplishment he reportedly replied, "Convincing Hubert Humphrey that half a loaf is better than none." As an Obama supporter, I want the whole loaf. As an American who has endured executive incompetence and lies for the past eight years, I will gladly accept an intelligent pragmatist and take whatever part of the loaf I can get.
Michael Green

letters@thenation.com

European Socialism, R.I.P.

Beacon, N.Y.
André Schiffrin's attempt to make socialism relevant to a United States mired in crisis is worthwhile. However, having lived in Europe and worked with the overwhelmingly social democratically oriented labor movement for the past seventeen years, I find his description of European "socialism" dated and inaccurate.

The French party is socialist in name only, and in the European Parliament they sit with the Social Democrats. The Labour Party, even pre-Blair, is not a socialist party: its roots lie in Fabianism. In fact, there are no mass socialist parties in Europe. By the mid-'60s, virtually all had in effect renounced the class struggle and the Democratic Socialism of the early twentieth century. SDs no longer pursue socialism but a "social market economy," by which they understand a market regulated to produce socially desirable outcomes—not unlike the views of left-of-center US Democrats. In European public discourse, SD parties and their leaders are no longer referred to as socialist. European progressives vote SD only when there are no other viable choices, such as the Greens in Germany or the parties to the left of the Socialists in France.

Public ownership, which increased after World War II, has been greatly reduced. Over the past twenty-five years privatization has made deep inroads into publicly owned industries and public services. SD elites have accepted much of the free-trade, deregulation and privatization agendas. The EU, a favorite project of SD parties, is a "free market" project with an exceedingly weak democratic and social dimension. Among its latest projects is the liberalization and privatization of government services, including education and healthcare. Most of this has the enthusiastic support of SD parties, if not of all the unions.

Schiffrin's discussion of auto company nationalization and "giving workers a share in management" is also deeply

(continued on page 24)

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For Progressive Patriotism

If George Bush and Dick Cheney accomplished anything during the eight long years of their misrule, it was to confirm Dr. Johnson's observation that patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels. The soon-to-be-former president and vice president wrapped everything—from their initially illegitimate claim on the White House to undeclared wars, spying on Americans and even torture—in a red-white-and-blue flag of convenience. Borrowing more heavily from Joe McCarthy than Thomas Paine, Bush/Cheney gave a bad name not just to America but the to honorable inclination of Americans to express pride in their country.

EDITORIAL

Now it falls to Barack Obama to confirm the less commonly quoted but no less true adage of a World War II hero named George McGovern: "The highest patriotism is…a love of one's country deep enough to call [it] to a higher standard." Obama's challenge is neither romantic nor rhetorical. It is a practical responsibility, and the extent to which he accomplishes it will determine the success of his presidency and of the process of American renewal that begins with his inauguration.

How should Obama—a man whose reluctance to play the flag-pin game drew a campaign season inquisition by the media—approach the matter of patriotism? Not by avoiding it, and not by falling back on cheap symbolism. As Obama the candidate observed last year, "When we argue about patriotism, we are arguing about who we are as a country, and more importantly, who we should be." With that in mind, Obama the president must make it his mission to give voice to a patriotism dramatically more enlightened and inspiring than that preached by his predecessor.

For one thing, he can extend the definition of patriotism to include not just civic virtues but economic rights. It is a given that if Obama takes the oath he swears on January 20 seriously, he will restore executive branch respect for the system of checks and balances; he'll renounce torture; he'll restore the rule of law. But if there is hope for turning the American experiment in a more responsible and sustainable direction, the process must begin with a new understanding of patriotism that includes, finally, guaranteed healthcare for all, access to a good education and a fair distribution of this nation's resources.

Obama has already sketched the soft outlines of a liberal patriotism, with its respect for dissent and reverence for equal opportunity, which takes on new meaning when expressed by the nation's first African-American president. In one of the most important, if underreported, speeches of the campaign, he told a Missouri crowd, "I remember, when living for four years in Indonesia as a child, listening to my mother reading me the first lines of the Declaration of Independence: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' I remember her explaining how this declaration applied to every American, black and white and brown alike; how those words, and words of the United States Constitution, protected us from the injustices that we witnessed other people suffering during those years abroad. That's my idea of America."

As president, Obama has the position and the pulpit that will allow him to help us embrace a deeper, richer, more progressive patriotism. This, far more than any program, is where presidents define not just the transitory debates of their day but a fundamental understanding of America. Conservatives know this, and it is why they devote so much time to challenging the patriotism of all who stand to their

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left. Great progressives have known it as well. Franklin Roosevelt did not place his imprint on America with mere programs; he used every available means—from inaugural addresses to Thanksgiving proclamations—to foster a patriotism that included not just civil rights but economic rights. "There is, I fear, too great a tendency to give to patriotism merely an interest in making our country unconquerable in war, a feeling that our chief aim is to see that our army and our navy are sufficient for our protection. That is but a part of our patriotic duty," he declared on a distant Armistice (Veterans) Day. "Our country is in a sense continually at war against the ramparts of liberty, equality and justice on which our Republic is founded. Surging constantly are the evil forces of greed, of materialism, of selfishness, headed by those who cynically deny that there is any prosperity that cannot be expressed in dollars and cents, or happiness except in bank balances."

It falls to Barack Obama to tip the balance once more. Recent Democratic presidents have fallen short in this work—Jimmy Carter offered too much malaise and too little inspiration; Bill Clinton was too much of a tinkering technocrat to think big. John Kennedy was better at it, but his truncated presidency was always more about traveling hopefully than arriving. So FDR remains the touchstone. But he is no more than that. From Roosevelt we learn that it is possible for a president to speak seriously of grafting an economic bill of rights onto the founding documents of the Republic. But even if the current economic crisis recalls the mess Roosevelt inherited in 1932, these are different times, and America is a different country. Obama will have to find his own language of American renewal. This new president does not need to borrow words from his predecessor, but he should borrow FDR's determination to take one word—patriotism—and give it a definition as visionary, and as progressive, as this moment, with all its peril and potential, demands.

JOHN NICHOLS

The Crisis Is Global

The nation's fast-darkening circumstances define the essential dilemma of Barack Obama's presidency. His instinct is to govern by consensus, in the moderate middle ground of politics. Yet dire events are pushing the new president toward solutions more fundamental than those he had intended. The longer he resists taking more forceful action, the more likely it is that he will be overwhelmed by the gathering adversities.

COMMENT

Three large obstacles are blocking Obama's path. The first is one of scale: his nearly $800 billion recovery package sounds huge, but it is perhaps two or three times too small to produce a turnaround. The second is that the financial system—still dysfunctional despite the bailouts—requires much more than fiscal stimulus and bailout: the government must nationalize and supervise the banks to ensure that they carry out the lending and investing needed for recovery. This means liquidating some famous nameplates—led by Citigroup—that are spiraling toward insolvency. The third is that the crisis is global: the US economy cannot return to normal unless the unbalanced world trading system is

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Noted.

CHANGING.GOV: **Robert Gibbs**, Obama's chief spokesman and a seasoned press operative, knows how to maneuver around prickly issues. So when the most popular question on **Change.gov** asked whether Obama would appoint a special prosecutor to "independently investigate the gravest crimes of the Bush administration, including torture and warrantless wiretapping"—besting 76,000 other questions submitted in recent weeks by citizens—Gibbs simply ignored it. Instead, he recorded a YouTube video tackling other popular questions. Then Obama aides posted a note on January 9 inaccurately categorizing the special prosecutor question as "previously answered." That gambit was the first obvious failure at Change.gov, Obama's admirable attempt to create a portal for more open and transparent government.

It is striking that Obama's aides, who helped win the election by harnessing new media, believed they could just spin away from their online interlocutors. Instead, the move backfired immediately. **Bob Fertik**, the activist who submitted the question, campaigned for it; and progressive websites, including thenation.com, blasted the dodge. Within a day, MSNBC's **Keith Olbermann** picked up the story. A day later, Obama was compelled to answer the question in an interview with ABC's **George Stephanopoulos**, who quoted it and pressed Obama with two follow-ups. Obama's answer, which prioritized moving "forward" but did not rule out a special prosecutor, made the front page of the January 12 **New York Times**.

By blatantly ducking a tough question, Gibbs set off a reaction that forced Obama to answer it. With transparent government and vigilant reporting, important questions can actually trickle up. ARI MELBER

SIGNALS OF CHANGE: When **Julius Genachowski** noted the reaction to **Barack Obama**'s technology and innovation plan in late 2007, the former **Federal Communications Commission** staffer used a word that should be at the heart of every discussion about media policy: "democracy." "The response to the plan has been great," he blogged. "One independent comment that stands out: 'If even half of the proposals outlined here were to be implemented, it would fundamentally change the nature of our democracy for the better.' That's why Barack Obama is running for President—fundamentally changing the country and the world for the better."

Sure, that reads like the raving of an Obama enthusiast. And Genachowski, one of Obama's subeditors at the **Harvard Law Review**, is close to the president-elect. But it is a closeness with salutary consequences; he is set to serve as the next FCC chair. Having someone in that seat who recognizes that debates about bandwidth and bytes define not just media systems but democratic discourse is a very good thing.

How good remains to be seen; industry pressures on the FCC are intense. But Genachowski has impressed key media activists. "It is clear that he understands the importance of open networks and a regulatory environment that promotes innovation and competition to a robust democracy and a healthy economy," says **Public Knowledge**'s **Gigi Sohn**. "I believe that in his new role, Julius will work to ensure that the FCC meets its legal obligation to protect the 'public interest, convenience and necessity' and will develop a principled, strategic policy agenda that promotes openness, free speech, competition, innovation, access, economic growth and consumer welfare." If Sohn is right, Genachowski can change the nature of our democracy for the better. JOHN NICHOLS

LABOR'S SCHISM: It's not exactly a convenient moment for labor to fight a civil war in California. **Arnold Schwarzenegger** has declared "financial Armageddon" over a projected $42 billion budget shortfall—a deficit he intends to fill by hiking taxes on the poor and slashing pay for home health aides to minimum wage. Meanwhile, the arrival of a labor-friendly president marks a historic opening for passing labor law reform. It's a moment when it might be nice to have all of labor's hands on deck.

Instead, on January 9, **SEIU** moved to dismantle one of its largest locals, the Oakland-based **United Healthcare Workers-West**, slicing off nearly half its members into a new local formed for long-term-care workers. A decision by SEIU to put UHW under trusteeship may be imminent as well. The lopsided board vote was the decisive moment in a long-simmering conflict between the two parties over how to expand labor's ranks and build true worker power, with SEIU pushing for mega-mergers of local unions to deal with large employers and UHW cultivating a militancy that has allowed it to make substantial wage gains for its members—while quickly attracting new ones. SEIU president **Andy Stern** claims UHW is undermining national strategy and compares its president, **Sal Rosselli**, to Southern whites who resisted federal civil rights legislation. "At some point," he says, "it's a question of the rule of law."

Rosselli calls the planned merger "outrageous and undemocratic." "I feel like he's driving SEIU over a cliff," he says, "and he just has blinders on." UHW activists formed the bulk of SEIU's army in labor's campaign for Obama in California and are, in Rosselli's view, the linchpin to fighting off Schwarzenegger's austerity plan. But Rosselli and many rank-and-filers say UHW members will turn their energies to fighting SEIU, worksite by worksite. And the fight will get messy in Washington, too, given that key labor players—from incoming Labor Secretary **Hilda Solis**, to House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi**, to House Education and Labor Committee chair **George Miller**—have thousands of UHW members in their districts and are being lobbied heavily by both sides on this internecine battle rather than, say, on the **Employee Free Choice Act**. It's a vulnerable time for SEIU, which is facing inquiries into embezzlement at another local, while being singled out as undemocratic and corrupt in a **Chamber of Commerce** propaganda war. But Stern dismisses concerns that SEIU's fight in California will undermine labor movement goals. "There's never a right time," he says.

Outside critics disagree. "It looks like this train is zooming toward a huge wreck in which trusteeship will be imposed on a very vital local," says labor historian **Nelson Lichtenstein** of the University of California, Santa Barbara. "Stern is no Teamster boss, but this is a blunder." ESTHER KAPLAN

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simultaneously reformed. Globalization has vastly undermined US productive strength, as trade deficits have led the nation into deepening debtor dependence.

While Washington debates the terms of Obama's stimulus package, others see disappointment ahead. The Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, an outpost of Keynesian thinking, expresses its doubts in emotional language that professional economists seldom use. "The prospects for the US economy have become uniquely dreadful, if not frightening," Levy analysts reported. The institute's updated strategic analysis warns that the magnitude of negative forces—the virtual collapse of bank lending, private spending, consumer incomes and demand—"will make it impossible for US authorities to apply a fiscal and monetary stimulus large enough to return output and unemployment to tolerable levels within the next two years." Instead, the unemployment rate is likely to rise to 10 percent by 2010. Obama's package amounts only to around 3 percent, annually, of GDP in a $13 trillion economy. Levy's analysis calculates that it would require federal deficits of 8 to 10 percent of GDP—$2 trillion or more—to reverse the economic contraction. And yet, the institute observed, it is inconceivable that this level "could be tolerated for purely political reasons" or that the United States could sustain the rising indebtedness without terrifying our leading creditors, like China.

Stimulus alone by a single nation will not work, in other words, given the distorted economic system that Obama has inherited. The stern warning from the Levy analysts and other skeptical experts is that the United States has no choice but to undertake deeper systemic reforms right now, rather than wait for recovery. Will Obama have the nerve to tackle these fundamentals? To do so he would have to abandon some orthodox assumptions about free trade and private finance that he shares with his economic advisers.

The most obvious and immediate obstacle to systemic change is the dysfunctional financial system. It remains inert and hunkered down in self-protection, despite the vast billions in public money distributed so freely, no strings attached, in the last days of the Bush administration. We will learn soon enough whether Obama intends to start over with a more forceful approach. Obama and his advisers are eager to get another $350 billion in bailout funds, but they have remained silent on whether this will finance a government takeover of the system. Without such a move, the taxpayers will essentially be financing the slow death of failed institutions while getting nothing in return.

The most complex barrier to recovery is globalization and its negative impact on the economy. Given our grossly unbalanced trade, we have kept the system going by playing buyer of last resort—absorbing mountainous trade deficits and accumulating more than $5 trillion in capital debt to pay for swollen imports, while our domestic economy steadily loses jobs and production to other nations. Renewed consumer demand at home will automatically "leak" to rival economies and trading partners by boosting their exports to the US market—which subtracts directly from our GDP. This is the trap the lopsided trading system has created for recovery plans, and it cannot be escaped without fundamental reform.

To put it crudely, Obama's stimulus program might restart factories in China while leaving US unemployment painfully high. In fact, some leakage may occur via the very banks or industrial corporations that taxpayers have generously assisted. What prevents Citigroup and General Motors from using their fresh capital to enhance overseas operations rather than investing at home? The new administration will therefore have to rethink the terms of globalization before its domestic initiatives can succeed.

A global recovery compact would require extremely difficult diplomacy but could be possible because it is in everyone's self-interest. The United States could propose the outlines with one crucial condition: if the trading partners are unwilling to act jointly, Washington will have to proceed unilaterally. A grand bargain could start with US agreement to serve once again as the main engine that pulls the global economy out of the ditch. That is, the United States will have to continue as the buyer of last resort for the next few years, and China and other nations will have to bail us out with still more lending. In the short run, this would dig us into a deeper hole, but the United States could insist on a genuinely reformed system and mutually agreed return to balanced trade, once global recovery is under way.

Congress can enact the terms now—a ceiling on US trade deficits that will decline steadily to tolerable levels, as well as new rules for US multinational enterprises that redefine their obligations to the home economy. Unlike in other advanced nations, US companies get a free ride from their home government when they relocate production abroad. That has to change if the United States is to reverse its weakening world position. Tax penalties plus national economic policy can drive US multinationals to keep more of their value-added production at home. These measures can be enforced through the tax code and, if necessary, a general tariff that puts a cap on imports. Formulating these provisions now for application later, once the worst of the crisis is over, would give every player the time to adjust investment strategies gradually.

President Obama and his team may at first scorn the notion of saving the world while negotiating a bailout for the United States. They will be reluctant to talk about reforming the global system by threatening to invoke emergency tariffs. But we are in uncharted waters. Impossible ideas abruptly begin to seem plausible. Six months from now, if the Obama recovery does not materialize, the president may discover he has to reinvent himself.

WILLIAM GREIDER

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Roland Burris

From Illinois comes Roland Burris,
Who's taken great pains to assure us
He's practically sainted
And surely untainted
By all that Blagojevich tsuris.

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Rick Warren's Clout

COMMENT

How much clout does Rick Warren have? The California megachurch minister and opponent of gay marriage who will deliver the invocation at Barack Obama's inauguration had his income tax returns audited in 1996. When the IRS tried to collect the taxes it claimed he owed, Warren went to court. Congress then passed a law granting Warren's tax deduction, pre-empting the US Court of Appeals from even taking up the case against him. The votes in the House and Senate were unanimous.

The IRS permits members of the clergy to claim exemptions for their housing. At the time of Warren's audit the amount claimed had to be "reasonable"—it shouldn't exceed the fair market value for the rental of the home. That 1996 audit concluded that Warren was deducting more than that—the IRS said he owed it $55,300. Warren challenged the IRS in tax court, arguing that his housing exemption should be unlimited.

The facts were simple: in 1993 Warren deducted $77,663, his entire Saddleback Church salary that year, as a housing expense—and paid no taxes at all on that salary. In addition, he claimed a deduction for his mortgage expenses—even though they had been covered by the salary. He made similar claims in subsequent tax returns.

Warren spent four years defending his housing deduction in tax court; in May 2000 he won. The court struck down the IRS's "reasonable" clergy-housing cap and accepted Warren's argument that his housing claim could be unlimited. The IRS appealed, and since Warren lives in California, the case went to the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, known for its liberal judges. That court declared that it wanted to consider not only whether the IRS had been right in trying to limit Warren's tax deduction for housing but also whether the tax break for clergy housing violated the establishment clause in the Bill of Rights, which requires separation of church and state.

Seeking arguments on the constitutionality of the "parsonage exemption," as it was called, the Ninth Circuit panel appointed Erwin Chemerinsky as a friend of the court. At the time, Chemerinsky was teaching law at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles; today he is dean of the law school at the University of California, Irvine (and thus my colleague). Chemerinsky observed that the housing tax exemption applied only to "ministers of the gospel"—not to leaders of secular nonprofits engaged in humanitarian work. He noted that the rule was established in 1954, at the height of the cold war, after a Congressman argued that "in these times when we are being threatened by a godless and antireligious world movement we should correct this discrimination against certain ministers of the gospel who are carrying on such a courageous fight against this foe." Chemerinsky concluded that the exemption represented an intentional government subsidy of religion, and thus it violated the First Amendment's establishment clause.

But before the three-judge panel could rule, either on the IRS effort to collect back taxes from Warren or on Chemerinsky's broader argument for declaring the entire exemption unconstitutional, Congress stepped in—and acted with "almost miraculous" speed, as Richard Hammar, editor of the *Church Law & Tax Report* newsletter, explained to the *New York Times*. The new law granted Warren his deductions (along with any other clergy who had done the same—although Warren was the only one to end up in court). Congress also put into law, from that time forward, the IRS's "fair rental value" rule.

The Clergy Housing Allowance Clarification Act of 2002 was approved unanimously by Congress, then signed into law by George W. Bush on May 20, 2002, rendering the IRS case against Warren moot. "I have filed hundreds of briefs in federal courts," Chemerinsky told me, "and this is the only time that Congress passed a law to make a specific pending case moot." He added, "It is very rare for Congress to pass a law to make a pending case moot before there was a decision."

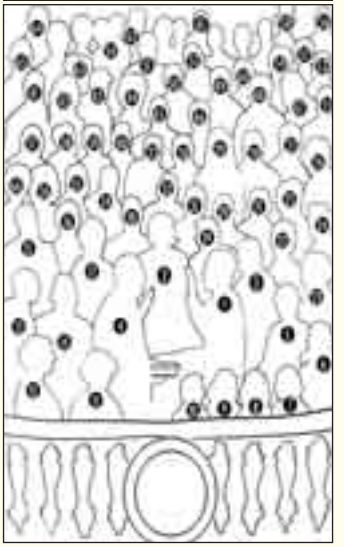
Warren prevailed in part because of his prominence as the author of a book that has sold more than 25 million copies and as the founder of his 22,000-member church in Orange County. He prevailed also because he saw how his tax deduction could be turned into an example of what his defenders called "judicial activism at its worst." Right-wing talk-radio host Hugh Hewitt called it an example of "the implacable hostility of the political left to the role of God in the world and the country."

Religious denominations from Reform Jews to Southern Baptists expressed their support for the exemption. But their goal was preserving their own exemptions in the future, not defending Warren's past tax returns. The bill could have established the "reasonable" standard the IRS sought for the exemption without letting Warren off the hook. Or Congress could have waited to see what the courts would decide about the constitutionality of the exemption before acting on it.

Instead, Rick Warren posed as a defender of clergy of all faiths against a godless left-wing court. Not even the most progressive members of Congress were willing to stand up to him—not Ted Kennedy, Paul Wellstone, Russ Feingold, Bernie Sanders or Barney Frank. Obama's invitation to Warren is dismaying, but this history may make it more comprehensible. JON WIENER

Jon Wiener, a Nation *contributing editor, teaches history at the University of California, Irvine.*

Key to Cover



1. Barack Obama
2. Michelle Obama
3. Martin Luther King Jr.
4. Thurgood Marshall
5. Rosa Parks
6. Barbara Jordan
7. Cynthia Wesley
8. Carole Robertson
9. Denise McNair
10. Addie Mae Collins
11. Emmett Till
12. Susan B. Anthony
13. C.T. Vivian
14. James Meredith
15. Homer Plessy
16. Harvey Milk
17. Ida B. Wells
18. Malcolm X
19. Bayard Rustin
20. John Lewis
21. Mahatma Gandhi
22. Abraham Lincoln
23. Frederick Douglass
24. Cesar Chavez
25. Sojourner Truth
26. Nelson Mandela
27. Stephen Biko
28. Oliver Brown (*Brown v. Board of Education*)
29. Chief Joseph
30. Lyndon Johnson
31. Medgar Evers
32. Rev. James Reeb
33. Fred Shuttleworth
34. W.E.B. Du Bois
35. Ralph Abernathy
36. Viola Gregg Liuzzo
37. Marcus Garvey
38. Andrew Goodman
39. James Chaney
40. Michael Schwerner
41. John Brown
42. Jackie Robinson
43. Dolores Huerta
44. Mary White Ovington
45. William Lloyd Garrison
46. Wang Dan
47. Stephen Samuel Wise
48. Harriet Tubman
49. Dred Scott
50. Booker T. Washington
51. David Richmond (*and*)
52. Joseph McNeil (*Greensboro Four*)
53. Martin Delany
54. The Little Rock Nine
55. William Still
56. Thomas Garrett
57. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
58. Samuel Burris
59. Thomas Paine
60. Abigail Kelley Foster
61. Jesse Jackson
62. Eugene V. Debs
63. Lucretia Mott
64. Paul Robeson
65. Henry David Thoreau
66. Shirley Chisholm

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Ten Things.

This new monthly feature was conceived by writer and Nation *editorial board member Walter Mosley as a kind of do-it-yourself opinion and action device. Most often "Ten Things" will offer a brief list of recommendations for accomplishing a desired political or social end, often by bringing to light something generally unknown. The purpose of the new feature is to go to the heart of issues in a stripped-down, active and informed way. After getting our visiting expert—or everyday person—to construct the list, we will interview that person and post a brief online version of "Ten Things," with links to relevant websites, books or other information. Readers who wish to propose ideas for "Ten Things" should e-mail us at nationtenthings@gmail.com.*

What You Can Do About the War in Congo

The peace agreement signed in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006 did not end the war. An estimated 400,000 women have been raped in the past ten years in what can only be called an act of femicide—the planned and systemic destruction of women. Women have suffered fistulas from rapes with knives, guns and penises. Women have been forced to eat dead babies. Soldiers who are HIV-positive are sent to villages to rape wives in front of their husbands, girls in front of their fathers. The systematic breakdown of the family is part of a larger plan to loosen the community's grip on its natural resources—diamonds, gold and especially coltan, used to make laptops and cellphones.

In this first installment, we talked to Eve Ensler, playwright, activist and founder of V-Day, a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. Ensler's approach to "Ten Things" is a list for the nation to put pressure on President-elect Obama to focus on Africa without delay.

1 Educate yourself about Congo's history of Belgian colonialism, its connection to the Rwandan genocide, the horrific femicide that is occurring there, which has left hundreds of thousands of women raped and sexually tortured, and the economic war that is fueling the violence. Spread the word. Visit newsite.vday.org/drcongo/background. Educate others by holding a teach-in (raisehopeforcongo.org/node/16) for your community. Watch "Beneath Her Pange" (newsite.vday.org/spotlight-video) and "LUMO" (gomafilmproject.org).

2 Help support a burgeoning grassroots women's movement in the DRC and around the world. Organizations include Heal Africa (healafrica.org/cms/), Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (hhi.harvard.edu), International Rescue Committee (theirc.org), Raise Hope for Congo (raisehopeforcongo.org) and Human Rights Watch (hrw.org/en/africa). Support Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource, Power to Women and Girls of DRC (newsite.vday.org/drcongo), a global campaign.

3 Demand a tenfold increase in UN peacekeepers—including women peacekeepers specifically trained in sexual violence—by writing to your elected officials.

4 Demand that women be involved in any future peace talks, by writing to your elected officials.

5 Demand the arrest and prosecution of war criminals involved in sexual violence, child soldiering and other atrocities at the International Criminal Court, by writing to your elected officials.

6 Demand that President-elect Obama's administration put pressure on the Rwandan and Congolese leadership to come together at the negotiating table and stop supporting Laurent Nkunda and the FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), respectively.

7 Pressure the DRC government to make ending sexual violence a priority, by writing to President Joseph Kabila. For a downloadable letter, visit newsite.vday.org/drcongo/getinvolved. Tell him to train and support many more women police officers who can protect vulnerable women.

8 Help provide resources to raped and violated women. Donate to the City of Joy, a joint project of Panzi Hospital (panzihospitalbukavu.org), V-Day and UNICEF, where women can turn their pain into power; or buy a handmade Congolese bag (store-vday.org) to support the economic empowerment of women survivors. To donate, go to secure.ga4.org/01/drcongo.

9 Write to your local editorial boards and ask them to cover the Congo war. Blog about the Congo war.

10 Attend the Turning Pain Into Power Tour (newsite.vday.org/pain-into-power-tour), a nationwide tour coming to a city near you.

CONCEIVED BY WALTER MOSLEY
with research by Rae Gomes

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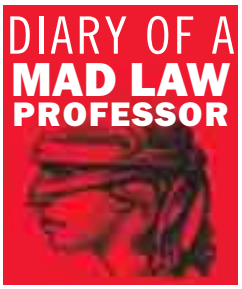
Patricia J. Williams

Drowning Our Sorrows, Lifting a Glass

Millions of people are expected to descend on the nation's capital for the inauguration of Barack Obama. It is unprecedented: churches, temples, mosques and tribal councils have hired buses to attend. Schools are closing for the day. Universities are setting up JumboTrons to watch the festivities. Global media will join the dancing in the streets.

A friend recently asked me if I thought all these constituencies were celebrating the same things. Did I think this coronation-scaled civic bliss was mostly about Obama's being our first African-American president? Or was it because his win convinces us that some "post-race" American Dream has been ultimately affirmed? That he's going to improve the economy? Repair global relations?

The question made me reflect for a moment. Yes, the symbolism of his race is significant, although it certainly cannot be equated with the end of racism. And surely we're uplifted by Obama's being so genuinely likable and smart. No doubt the euphoria is also unusually great because his campaign drew constituents into political engagement—the phone banks, the door-to-door canvassing, the social networks, mass e-mails and text messages. As a result, people feel personal, even possessive, satisfaction about his victory.



But at least as important as all that, I think, is a kind of Wizard of Oz–ish fizzy relief about George W. Bush's exit—as in Ding Dong, the Wicked Warlock is melting into a nice little past-tense puddle. There's a giddily celebratory sweeping out of the indubitably, absolutely, completely, very worst president in our history. So many bad things have happened in the past eight years that it's hard to keep them all in one's head at one time. Another friend says he hung a list in the hallway of his apartment building, tabulating all the really awful things he blames Bush for. Other neighbors added to it. At first, he said, he was going to use it to host an inauguration party at which people would knock back a shot for each phenomenally inept executive flub. But then, he says, "I realized we'd all be drunk for a year."

In any event, it's a great list; the sheer length of it reminds one how dizzyingly mismanaged the executive office has been. Here are a few of the highlights, to get you in the mood of groveling gratitude for the new course we are about to embark upon:

Pax Americana and the aspiration to consolidate a global American empire. The Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive warfare. Hurricane Katrina and "heckuva job, Brownie." The explicit rejection of the Geneva Conventions. John Yoo's and Alberto Gonzales's redefinition of torture. Paul Wolfowitz as head of the World Bank subsidizing his girlfriend. Ahmad Chalabi. The FCC allowing greater consolidation of media. The outing of Valerie Plame. The manipulations asserting that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The addled handling of Harriet Miers's nomination to the Supreme Court. Opposition to stem cell research. The looting of the National Museum of Iraq, and the burning of Baghdad's National Library. Donald Rumsfeld's remarks that rioting in Iraq was the sign of a liberated people and that Iraq was no more violent than some American cities. Stacking the Civil Rights Commission with conservatives, like Abigail Thernstrom, who want to overturn sections of the Voting Rights Act. The shooting death of Italian intelligence officer Nicola Calipari and injury of journalist Giuliana Sgrena at the hands of American soldiers. The appointment of ultraconservatives John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court. Cheney filling his friend with birdshot. The USA Patriot Act. Doing away with habeas corpus. The National Security Agency's warrantless wiretapping of citizens' phone calls and e-mails. The notion of an unchecked, unaccountable "unitary executive." The failure to keep official numbers of dead Iraqi civilians. The forbidding of photographs, or even visibility, of American military dead. The multilayered, high-level lying about how football hero Pat Tillman was killed in Afghanistan. Halliburton taking kickbacks from Kuwaiti oil suppliers. Paul Bremer dispensing billions of dollars for contracts in Iraq, which disappeared, never to be accounted for or recovered. Blackwater mercenaries accused of murdering Iraqi civilians. "Military tribunals" established outside the military justice system, with no due process or right to an attorney or to cross-examination or even to know the charges. The silly disparagement of the national anthem sung in Spanish. Bush talking directly to God. Abu Ghraib. Profiling Arab, Muslim and Latino immigrants. Guantánamo. Extraordinary rendition. Lousy veterans' benefits. Lousy veterans' hospitals. The failure to provide soldiers with reinforced armored vehicles ("You go to war with the army you have," explained Rumsfeld). The refusal to recognize post-traumatic stress disorder as a legitimate condition. Monica Goodling's political litmus tests in hiring for nonpolitical posts in the Justice Department. Expelling Helen Thomas from the White House press room and putting in fake reporter "Jeff Gannon" to throw adoring softball questions. John Ashcroft's draping of bare-breasted sculptures in the Justice Department. His subpoenas of more than 2,500 records of abortions performed at public hospitals. Gonzales firing US Attorneys around the country for political reasons. Oh, and did I forget the economy?

This is only a short list—it doesn't even touch on the things we were spared but that might have happened: Bush's (failed) nomination of Bernard Kerik to head Homeland Security; the privatization of Social Security; the elevation of Alberto Gonzales and Robert Bork to the Supreme Court; a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

"Honestly," says my friend, "who needs booze? Just reading the list, you could get drunk and have a killer hangover." I do suppose we'll all sober up after inauguration day. But I'm going to sneak a look at the list every now and then, just to make sure I don't take anything for granted. However challenging the future we face, an Obama administration represents real change. ■

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Eric Alterman

Gaza Agonistes

Within the mainstream media punditocracy, discussion of the Israeli invasion of Gaza is not only one-sided in Israel's favor but also deeply contemptuous of anyone who deviates from that side. ("It takes real stupidity to blame it on Israel," writes Richard Cohen.) On the nonliberal left—including, alas, most of what has been published on this magazine's website—Israel is not merely guilty of a foolish misadventure but is sufficiently evil to have earned itself a South Africa–style boycott. The middle, meanwhile, is a muddle because it's not so easy to figure out how a small, powerful but beleaguered nation ought to address a threat from an implacable ideological foe who lives on your doorstep, is sworn to your destruction, lobs missiles into your cities and hides behind its civilian population. And given the ferocity of the likely response, coupled with the unlikelihood that anyone will actually listen in good faith, the benefits of intervening in this debate from anything but an extremist perspective are decidedly murky. For my own trouble, for instance, Andrew Sullivan has compared me to the authors of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, while *Boston Globe* columnist Cathy Young has accused me of blaming Hitler's victims for Palestinian misery.

If I lived in Europe—to say nothing of an Arab or Islamic nation—where the Palestinians are held to be innocent victims of Israeli aggression, my strong personal identification with, and intellectual belief in, the historic Zionist project would no doubt lead me to spend most of my time defending Israel's legitimacy, if not its every action. But in the United States, where right-wing Jewish organizations and neoconservative pundits dominate nearly all Middle East discussion—and where one rarely if ever hears about, say, Israel's illegal settlement and expropriation policies or the daily indignities and immiseration of Palestinian life—I find myself forced to focus on the various means by which pro-Israel hawks seek to discredit and delegitimize anyone who dares to disagree with them.

The central headquarters of America's Middle East Thought Police are the websites of *The New Republic*, *Commentary* and *The Weekly Standard*—who share not only a number of individual writers but a style of argument that, in times of Israel-related tension, tends to resemble less that of a sophisticated journal of opinion than the bathroom wall of a Jewish junior high school.

A classic of the genre can be found in a blog post by ex–*New Republic* owner Martin Peretz called "Don't F*ck with the Jews"—a comically inappropriate headline to anyone who has ever seen, much less considered, um, "fucking" with Mr. Peretz. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, wrote an op-ed in the *Forward* in which he objected to what he termed the blog's "obscene, cowboy-like delight" in "the damage Israel's army is able to inflict." Yoffie is no pushover for Jewish peaceniks. The same op-ed also contained an intemperate attack on the new Jewish peace lobby, J Street, whose work has been endorsed not only by a number of prominent American Jews but also Israeli politicians and ex-military officials for its refusal to draw moral distinctions between Israel's invasion and Hamas's rockets. And yet even this criticism—misguided in my view—sounded positively Gandhi-esque compared with that of Peretz's assistant and informal mini-me, James Kirchick, who termed J Street an American Jewish "Surrender Lobby." *The Weekly Standard*'s Michael Goldfarb chimed in by calling J Street "obsequious" to terrorists and "hostile" to Israel, but *Commentary*'s Noah Pollak won the contest by stringing together "appalling," "contemptible," "unrealistic," "silly" and "dishonest" before adding the predictable "anti-Israel." Whether or not one shares J Street's views, that language is obvious evidence of panic among those whose position as the self-appointed spokesmen for American Jews has grown increasingly tenuous, especially since their uncritical cheerleading for the disastrous US invasion of Iraq and Israel's failed incursion into Lebanon three years later.

No less revealing of this panic in the neocon playground are the assaults on the reputations of a group of young liberal Jewish bloggers who—like the J Streeters—cannot be silenced by personal invective. Peretz and Pollak, in particular, whine about the refusal of what they call the Juicebox Mafia—meaning Matt Yglesias, Ezra Klein and Spencer Ackerman—to toe the official Israeli line on the invasion of Gaza. "They are pip-squeaks," writes the putative pugilist, Martin Peretz. "I pity them their hatred of their inheritance." (This is also unintentionally funny on Peretz's part, when you consider that it is Peretz's wife's inheritance that allowed him to purchase—and nearly destroy—what was once America's flagship liberal weekly magazine, and which provides the only reason anyone, anywhere pays attention to the venom he regularly spews there.) Pollak's attacks are characterized by a similar lack of personal grace or sense of proportion. These three bloggers, who have "disgraceful" views, he argues, only "write about Israel…when they can condemn it" and "have nothing invested in Israel."

Reading these missives, I was reminded of a conference I attended a year or so ago at the Center for Jewish History, sponsored by the excellent Jewish student publication *New Voices*. On stage, Ruth Wisse—who happens to be Harvard's Martin Peretz Professor of Yiddish Literature—instructed the assembled aspiring journalists that they should think of themselves not as honest and independent-minded social critics and thinkers (like, say, Nathan Glazer or Michael Walzer, who were on stage with her) but as "soldiers" in Israel's cause, armed with pens rather than Uzis. At the time, I thought it was just about the most un-Jewish attitude a person could hold. After all, the Talmudic tradition is devoted to endless ethical and intellectual disputation. It is no less so today… ■

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WHAT OBAMA MEANS TO THE WORLD

When Barack Obama was elected the forty-fourth president of the United States, cheers rang out across the globe, from the village of Kogelo, Kenya (home to Obama's paternal grandmother), to the village of Moneygall, Ireland (land of his maternal ancestors). This elation wasn't just a matter of genealogy; Obama's victory resonated as a symbol of possibility for the oppressed around the world. The lessons it drew were many; the hope it elicited, of many shades. On the eve of Obama's inauguration we asked Nation *columnist Gary Younge (the Alfred Knobler Fellow at The Nation Institute) and four other correspondents to reflect on the global and local significances of this American moment.* —*The Editors*

by GARY YOUNGE

When author and screenwriter Ronan Bennett was wrongfully imprisoned by the British in the infamous Long Kesh in Northern Ireland in the early '70s, a number of books made the rounds among the Irish Republican prisoners. There was Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, which tells the story of a Bolshevik revolutionary imprisoned by the Soviet state he helped create, and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Solzhenitsyn's account of an ordinary prisoner in a Soviet labor camp. But the one that spoke to Bennett most urgently was *Soledad Brother*, the prison letters of black American militant George Jackson.

"The other books didn't have the visceral impact, but *Soledad Brother* was just something I could relate to completely. I felt I knew the man," Bennett recalls. "There were all kinds of recognizable elements in our struggle. The most powerful part was the way he conducted himself in the jail.... It was about dignity. Never, ever folding or letting threats from the jailers make you collapse.... It was about being principled, dignified and resistant. I tried as best as I could to replicate that attitude of no compromise, resistance and the emphasis they put on solidarity. Strong standing up for the weak."

Bennett had never met a black person. Indeed, the only ones he'd ever seen had been those serving in the British army. Nonetheless, as an Irish Catholic in occupied Ulster, black America loomed large in his life. "From a very early age my family had supported Martin Luther King and civil rights," he says. "We had this instinctive sympathy with black Americans. A lot of the iconography and even the anthems, like 'We Shall Overcome,' were taken from black America. By about '71 or '72, I was more interested in Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver than Martin Luther King."

For most of the last century, progressives and the oppressed around the world have looked to black America as a beacon—the redemptive force that stood in permanent dissidence against racism at home and imperialism abroad. "No African came in freedom to the shores of the New World," wrote nineteenth-century French intellectual Alexis de Tocqueville. "The Negro transmits to his descendants at birth the external mark of his ignominy. The law can abolish servitude, but only God can obliterate its traces." That "external mark" has acted like a passport to an outside world that ostensibly distinguishes black America from the rest of the country and its policies.

When Kwame Nkrumah came to power in a newly independent Ghana, he sent for black American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois to edit the *Encyclopedia Africana* and Paul Robeson to take up the chair of music and drama at Accra University. Even as colonial France massacred Algerians by the score, it opened its arms wide to the likes of Josephine Baker, James Baldwin and Richard Wright. For some time during the 1980s and '90s, Jesse Jackson acted as a rogue ambassador, parachuting into trouble spots and freeing hostages.

This affinity found potent expression in sport and popular culture too. For most of the last century, there was an organic connection between black artists and the aspirations of African-Americans and other oppressed minorities. Their songs, like Sam Cooke's "Change Is Gonna Come" and McFadden and Whitehead's "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now," provided a soundtrack for a generation of liberation politics (not to mention Barack Obama's campaign). In sports, Tommie Smith and John Carlos greeted "The Star-Spangled Banner" from the Olympic podium in Mexico City in 1968 with their clenched fists. Their protest has resonated across nations and ages. Margaret Lambert, a Jewish high jumper prevented from competing in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, told NPR last year how delighted that protest had made her feel.

Then there was the inimitable Muhammad Ali. "We knew Muhammad Ali as a boxer, but more importantly for his political stance," says Zairean musician Malik Bowens in the film

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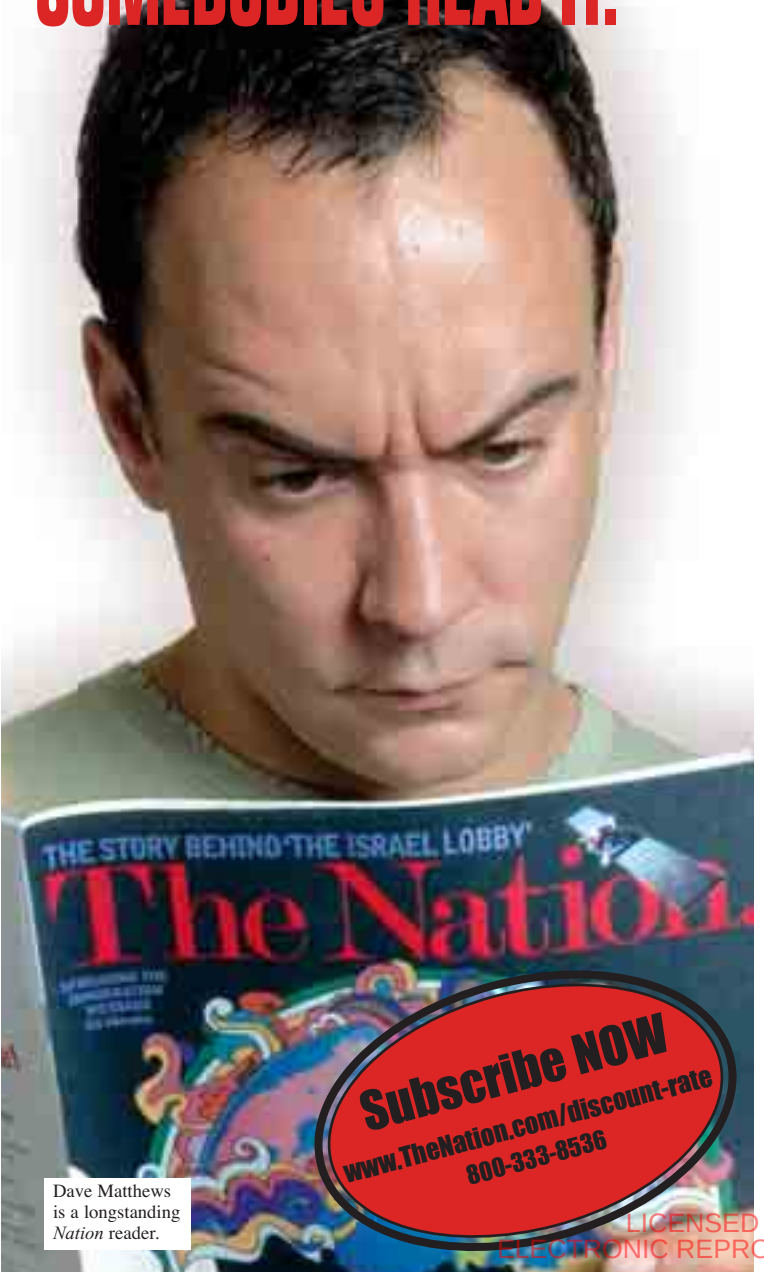

Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

When We Were Kings. "When we saw that America was at war with a Third World country in Vietnam, and one of the children of the US said, '*Me*? You want me to fight against Vietcong?' It was extraordinary that in America someone could have taken such a position at that time. He may have lost his title. He may have lost millions of dollars. But that's where he gained the esteem of millions of Africans."

By the beginning of the new millennium, however, black America's most globally prominent faces were singing and rapping about getting rich. They were playing golf and tennis and staying clear of political controversies that might threaten their record-breaking endorsement deals. And in the figures of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, they were representing the most reactionary US foreign policy in at least a generation. When Secretary of State Powell addressed the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in September 2002, he was jeered. A year earlier, when he refused to show up at a United Nations anti-racism summit after the United States resisted all talk of reparations for slavery and stifled criticism of Israel, the cartoonist for the South African newspaper *Citizen* ridiculed him: "Coming Uncle Tom?" asked two characters representing participants at the conference. "De Massa in de big house says I ain't," responds a Powell dressed up as a house servant.

To the world, black Americans were looking and sounding increasingly like the rest of America—for better or worse.

But on November 4, 2008, black America was once again the toast of the world. Throughout the Caribbean, radios blared Mighty Sparrow's calypso hit "Barack the Magnificent"; firecrackers went off in El Salvador; Liberians danced in the street. The *Times of London*'s front page showed a picture of Obama below the words The New World. The *Sun*, Britain's top-selling daily tabloid, showed Obama under the headline One Giant Leap for Mankind.

In the tiny Romanian village of Rusciori, Obama Sorin Ilie Scoica was born on election day. "When I saw Obama on TV, my heart swelled with joy. I thought he was one of us Roma because of his skin color," said Maria Savu, the baby's grandmother, who hoped his name would bring him luck. In Ghana, John Atta Mills, an opposition candidate running on an agenda of change, produced posters of himself standing next to a life-size cutout of Obama. In Brazil, at least eight black candidates took advantage of a quirk in electoral laws so they could stand as "Barack Obama" in elections in October.

America had a black leader, and suddenly everybody else wanted one. Or at least they wondered how they could get hold of one. Political conversation in France, Britain and Germany, in particular, went almost effortlessly from how to keep immigrants out to how descendants of (mostly) immigrants could ascend to the highest office in the land—or why they could not. "America is a New World again," said Rama Yade, junior minister for human rights and France's only black government member. "On this morning, we all want to be American so we can take a bite of this dream unfolding before our eyes." Cem Özdemir, the first politician of Turkish descent to lead a German political party, was not holding his breath [see Paul Hockenos, page 17]. "In Europe there is still a long way to go," he told *Der Spiegel*. "The message is that it's time to move on in Europe. We have to give up seeing every political figure from an ethnic

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minority as an ambassador of the country of his forefathers."

In almost every instance the simple, honest answer to the question "Could it happen here?" was no. The Obama story was indeed about race. But at its root it was essentially about white people. Would they vote for him? Would they kill him?

"Millions of whites cannot reconcile in their minds with the idea that a black man with his wife and children would move into the White House," argued Fidel Castro. He was right. It just turned out not to make any substantial difference, since those millions of Americans could not bring themselves to vote for any Democrat. It's not clear whether white Europeans would be any more comfortable with electing a black leader in their own countries than some Republicans were here. Having basked in a smug state of superiority over America's social, economic and racial disparities, Europeans were forced by Obama's victory and the passions it stoked to face hard realities about their own institutional discrimination, which was not better or worse—just different.

With the exception of the Roma in Eastern Europe, levels of incarceration and deprivation of nonwhite people in Europe have not reached the level of African-Americans here (although the descendants of Bangladeshis in Britain and Algerians in France come close). Black Europeans enjoy little in the way of black American success. Individuals may break through, but there is nothing on the scale of numbers or wealth comparable with the black American middle class.

It only takes one, though. The question isn't whether nonwhite Europeans are ready to run for national office but whether white Europeans would embrace them. Fascism is once again a mainstream ideology on the continent. When a black woman was chosen as Miss Italy in the mid-'90s, some officials complained that she was "unrepresentative of Italian beauty," and the press crowned her "Miss Discord." Poland's foreign minister, Radek Sikorski, joked that Obama's grandfather was a cannibal. Even though the overwhelming majority of nonwhite Europeans were born in Europe, the fact that they are descendants of immigrants excludes them from the European national stories, which are understood to have only white protagonists.

"Where are you from?" an administrator asked me at university in Edinburgh in what has long been a typical conversation.

"Stevenage," I told him, referring to my hometown thirty miles north of London.

"Where were you born?"

"Hitchin," I said, referring to the town nearby.

"Well, before then?"

"Well, there was no before then."

"Well, where are your parents from?"

"Barbados."

"Ah, you're from Barbados," he said.

To this day "immigrant" and "nonwhite" are often used synonymously in France. Indeed, given the conflation of immigration and race in Europe, the fact that Obama's father was an immigrant was in some ways as significant as the fact that he was black. In that sense every country potentially has its Obama, depending on its social fault lines. For the broader symbolism of his win has less to do with race than with exclusion. Just take the group that in the popular imagination resides furthest from power, pluck one from its number, make him or her the national leader and you have an Obama story. In Bolivia it was Evo Morales, the first poor Amerindian to be elected; South Africa's Nelson Mandela went from jail to president in just four years; in Sweden it could be a Finn; in Bulgaria it could be a Turk. Banel Nicolita, a Roma and member of Romania's soccer team, has become known as "the Obama of Romanian football." For a man who is one of eight children raised in a mud house, the accolade could easily be translated as "a man of unlikely accomplishments." "Obama's victory is a motivation for us," said Gruia Bumbu, chair of the National Agency for the Roma.

There was, of course, more to the euphoria over Obama's victory than the question of exclusion—however and wherever it is framed. The defeat of the Republican agenda, with all the war and global havoc it has brought over the past eight years, was enough to make the world jump for joy. After Bush won in 2004, Britain's *Daily Mirror* ran a headline saying, Doh: 4 More Years Of Dubya… How can 59,054,087 people be so DUMB? The *Guardian*'s features supplement ran a page all in black with tiny words saying, Oh My God! Many understand Obama as America's belated but nonetheless more considered, less cavalier response to 9/11.

As one of the few members of America's political class not tainted by the Iraq invasion, he appeared a thinker as well as a decider. Worldly where Bush was parochial, consensual where Bush was confrontational, nuanced where Bush was brash, he struck the outside world as though he regarded dialogue and negotiation as strengths rather than weaknesses. With his Kenyan roots, multiracial upbringing and childhood experiences in Indonesia, he also struck a more global figure. Of twenty-two countries polled by Pew Research last July, in only one nation, Jordan, did a majority say they had more confidence in McCain than in Obama. In the remaining twenty-one, nine (ranging from Tanzania to Japan) backed Obama by more than thirty points. In only six was the margin in single digits.

This enthusiasm was not spread evenly geographically. Western Europe (particularly France) was elated, while the Middle East was wary. "In these nations, suspicions of American power are pervasive and extend beyond President Bush's personal unpopularity," argued Richard Wike of the Pew Global Attitudes Project. "Unlike in many other regions, in the Middle East there is little optimism about the post-Bush era." Nonetheless, with America's international standing at an all-time low, a change of direction was generally welcome.

But while antipathy toward Bush and what he had done to the world explains the breadth of Obama's appeal, it could never explain the depth. Relatives of mine in Barbados and Ireland followed the primaries closely. Children of friends at home in England asked if they could stay up to see the election results. They would never have done that for John Kerry. In the Pew poll, taken during the primary, respondents in Europe favored Obama over Hillary Clinton by significant margins.

"The American Negro has no conception of the hundreds of millions of other non-whites' concern for him," Malcolm X observed in his autobiography. "He has no conception of their feeling of brotherhood for and with him." And yet as Ronan Bennett's account of his time in prison shows, the identification went beyond race. Which brings us back to Obama, whose

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central appeal was not so much that he looked like other Americans as that he sounded so different—and not just in comparison to Bush. For if Obama represents a serious improvement over his predecessor, he also stands tall among other world leaders. At a time of poor leadership, he has given people a reason to feel passionate about politics. Brits, Italians, South Africans, French and Russians look at Obama and then at Gordon Brown, Silvio Berlusconi, Thabo Mbeki, Nicolas Sarkozy and Vladimir Putin and realize they could and should be doing a whole lot better.

Much of this is, of course, delusional. People's obsession with Obama always said more about them than him. Most wanted a paradigm shift in global politics, and, unable to elect governments that could fight for it, they simply assigned that role to Obama. His silence during the shelling of Gaza, however, was sobering for many. As a mainstream Democrat he stands at the head of a party that in any other Western nation would be on the right on foreign policy, the center on economic policy and the center-left on social policy.

Come inauguration day, that final symbolic set piece, the transition will be complete. The rest of the world must become comfortable with a black American, not as a symbol of protest but of power. And not of any power but a superpower, albeit a broken and declining one. A black man with more power than they. How that will translate into the different political cultures around the globe, whom it will inspire, how it will inspire them and what difference that inspiration will make will vary. From inauguration day people's perceptions of Obama will no longer hinge on what he is but on what he does. While it's unlikely that prisoners in Guantánamo have been passing around *samizdat* copies of *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama has already given Maria Savu a different understanding of what is possible for her grandson and maybe something for little Obama Scoica and the people of Rusciori to look up to. ■

Echoes of South African Redemption

by MARK GEVISSER

Johannesburg

The next president of the United States found his political voice, he writes in *Dreams From My Father*, through the antiapartheid movement—at a rally calling for divestment from South Africa while he was at Occidental College, to be precise. He discovered that he could use the South African freedom struggle to demand that his fellow students choose sides: not "between black and white" but between "dignity and servitude," "fairness and injustice," "commitment and indifference," "right and wrong."

IGOR KOPELNITSKY

Obama's story points to the symbolic significance of the South African struggle, particularly in the United States, where the antiapartheid solidarity movement inherited the mantle of the world's great moral cause from the civil rights movement. If the last great redemptive moment in global politics was Nelson Mandela's liberation and ascent to power in the early 1990s, then Obama's election has provided the next. Once more, a choice has been made: if not quite between "dignity and servitude" or even "right and wrong," then certainly between "commitment and indifference"—and, accordingly, between hope and cynicism, engagement and alienation.

The global euphoria triggered by the Obama moment gave us South Africans a particular buzz. Superficially, this had to do with the politics of identity: not just that he was a black man, an *African*, but that his very being expressed our struggle's "nonracial" values. In South Africa, remember, there was an Immorality Act that forbade intimate relations across the color bar, let alone marriage. The "unlawful carnal act" that produced Obama could have landed his parents in jail if it had taken place in South Africa—and certainly would have rendered the young family social outcasts.

But there is another dimension to South Africa's exhilaration after the Obama victory. When we woke up on the morning of November 5 to Obama's victory speech in Grant Park, we found ourselves reliving our "Mandela Moment" nearly fifteen years earlier. This was bittersweet: our era of redemptive politics has come and gone, and we find ourselves mired in a postindependence era of disillusionment and cynicism, with leaders not only inarticulate but manifestly self-interested and morally compromised.

Jacob Zuma, the man who will become South Africa's next president in April, is no Mandela. Deeply tainted by corruption and rape allegations (although cleared of the latter) and chronically in debt to the many interest groups and individuals who have supported him, he will in all likelihood be the accused in a long-drawn-out corruption trial even as he governs the country. Indeed, there are many who believe that Zuma's primary motivation in seeking the highest office is to keep himself out of jail.

Zuma's ascendancy—and the ousting of his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki—has had one salutary effect: finally, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has splintered, and a new party, the Congress of the People (COPE), has become the first viable alternative for black voters since the advent of democracy. Not surprisingly, COPE has been keen to invoke the Obama Revolution: at the party's founding conference in December, the delegates chanted "Hope!" and "Change!" at every opportunity, and its organizers are trying to replicate the Obama campaign's savvy use of new media and digital technology to

Mark Gevisser's book A Legacy of Liberation: Thabo Mbeki and the Future of the South African Dream *will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in the spring.*

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Dr. Brooks Landon is a Professor of English and Collegiate Fellow at The University of Iowa and Director of The University of Iowa General Education Literature Program. From 1999 to 2005, Professor Landon was chair of the Iowa English Department. He received his Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin.

Among Professor Landon's numerous awards and accolades are a University of Iowa M.L. Huit Teaching Award and an International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts Distinguished Scholarship.

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mobilize young supporters, particularly in the booming black middle class.

But the truth is that COPE's senior leaders are compromised too: the key players were lieutenants of Mbeki, defeated along with their leader by the Zuma insurgency within the ANC. They thus find it difficult to shake the allegation that they are acting out of self-interest (or sour grapes, at least) in taking up against the Zuma-led ANC. Their stated aspirations to usher in a more responsive and accountable democracy ring hollow too, given that they were for so long part of the very oligarchy that buttressed Mbeki. They may well have impeccable credentials as freedom fighters, but there is nothing in their demeanor or their oratory—let alone their intellects—to suggest that they might become South African Obamas.

Like many South Africans, I have the deepest yearnings for a politician of Obama's caliber to emerge out of postapartheid South Africa; having voted Mandela into office in 1994, we know exactly what it feels like, too. But perhaps paradoxically, there is something of a relief in being free, at last, of the politics of redemption. In the adolescent South African democracy, this is a critical rite of passage: coming to grips with the truth that politicians are flawed and self-interested men rather than liberating godheads.

Similar to the way the Obama campaign has mobilized Americans, Mandela's victory in 1994 unlocked a powerful sense of agency among all South Africans. But this dissipated over the subsequent decade and a half, as citizens seemed to cede their rights to a paternal, omnipotent leadership reminiscent of age-old feudal African society. The result has been an alienation rendered all the more profound by a crisis of expectation. There are high stakes indeed to the politics of redemption, as Barack Obama is about to discover. ■

Italy's New Racism

by FREDERIKA RANDALL

Rome

IGOR KOPELNITSKY

Emmanuel Bonsu Foster comes from Ghana. He was 13 when he settled in Italy with his parents. One sunny afternoon in late September, Foster, now 22, was sitting on a park bench in Parma waiting for his classes to begin at a nearby technical institute. Seven men—plainclothed police officers, although he didn't know that—suddenly appeared and knocked him to the ground. They beat and kicked him, beat him some more in the police car, strip-searched him at the station, taunted him with "monkey" and "negro," took Abu Ghraib–style photos of the cowering "criminal" and finally, after six hours, released him. His left eye was hemorrhaging, and he was carrying an envelope with his personal effects on which the cops had scrawled "Emmanuel Negro." It seemed Foster wasn't a pusher, after all. He was just black.

Once upon a time, this Catholic country prided itself that Italians were *brava gente*, good people, tolerant. No more. The right's snarling emphasis on "security" in the run-up to last April's elections (for "security," read: "protecting Italians from immigrants and Gypsies") sent a message that police have been quick to act on. Muslim immigrants should go "piss in their own mosques" was how the notorious deputy mayor of Treviso, Giancarlo Gentilini of the racist, xenophobic Northern League, put it. When Minister for Reforms Umberto Bossi remarked that Italians don't want "the Bingo Bongos" living here, the barroom racism of the third Berlusconi government was official.

Small wonder, then, that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, during a press conference with Dmitri Medvedev in Moscow on November 6, felt emboldened to make his little barroom joke too. "He's young, handsome and deeply tanned," quipped Silvio of the newly elected Barack Obama. If what the Italian press reported is true, it took many days of patient diplomacy before Berlusconi could finally have his routine congratulatory phone call with Obama.

There's an abyss in Italy these days between the many who think Berlusconi's a riot—and those who understand that Obama's victory means "the default mode is no longer white," as one commentator here put it. Hundreds of Italians posted "not in my name" messages on the web against Berlusconi's casual racism. Demographer Massimo Livi-Bacci, who has argued eloquently for the many benefits of immigration, observed that Obama's multicultural example will surely be good for Italy, which needs, he said, that evolution "brought about by integration and the blending of different social and ethnic groups."

"The shock waves from across the Atlantic" will change a lot of things, wrote the distinguished opinionist Barbara Spinelli in *La Stampa*, "and not only in politics, but in habits and public language." The xenophobe, she added, is "a creature of Spinoza's doleful passions: resentment, fear that voids the future, inability to hope or even to desire.… An Obama victory [is] good not only for America and not only because he is black…but because he shakes up that stasis that makes every civilization stagnate and perish."

Nevertheless, with just one Afro-Italian in Parliament, Jean-Léonard Touadi, and very few foreign-born Italians in its political class, Italy is struggling to represent the 4 million foreigners—6.7 percent of the population—who live and work in this country. These include people like the farmworkers in the tomato fields of Puglia, who labor in virtual bondage and sometimes disappear forever. Like the six Africans gunned down on the street by Camorra mobsters in Castel Volturno north of Naples one day this past fall, just to warn blacks there was no

Frederika Randall is a journalist and translator who lives in Rome.

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place for them in the drug trade. All those whose lives are made precarious by the so-called Bossi-Fini immigration law (named after Northern League chief Bossi and Gianfranco Fini of the "post-Fascist" National Alliance), which instantly transforms the legal immigrant who loses a job into an illegal immigrant, subject to immediate expulsion or else to serious exploitation as a shadow worker. Now the government is planning segregated schools for the children of immigrants, so they too can be shadow Italians. When the Northern League recently thundered against building new mosques, the only authority who spoke up in favor of Muslim immigrants was Milan Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi—and he was immediately dismissed as a "communist."

Although immigrants have little political voice, Italy does have a small but influential group of foreign-born intellectuals and public figures. These include writers like Algerian-born Amara Lakhous, author of *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*, and actor-playwright Moni Ovadia, born in Bulgaria, who brings his Jewish identity to bear on Italian racism against groups like the Romany. But then there is Egyptian-born Magdi Cristiano Allam, a 2008 convert to Christianity and conservative editorialist for *Corriere della Sera*, who recently launched a political party, Protagonists for Christian Europe. As the party name suggests, Allam, born Muslim, is now a crusader against multiculturalism and radical Islam, a true believer in Europe's Christian roots.

In his witty, exhilarating "what if" novel of 2008, *L'inattesa piega degli eventi* (An Unexpected Turn of Events), Enrico Brizzi brilliantly sums up the dusty, antiquated and ferociously reactionary attitudes of today's right, describing an Italy of 1960 in which Mussolini, having made peace with the Allies, has reached a ripe old age along with his Fascist government and its African colonies. While the mainland is frozen in a time warp along with its senile Duce, anti-Fascist revolt is brewing among the Ethiopian underclass…

Were it not for the patient work of historian Angelo Del Boca, Italians would know little about their brutal treatment of Africans in the past. Del Boca's 2005 book, *Italiani, brava gente?*, documents the mass slaughters—graves with as many as a thousand bodies have been uncovered—the use of chemical weapons and other atrocities the Italian army committed in the 1930s to subdue the tough Abyssinian and Libyan resistance. The hard questions that Germans have asked themselves about Nazism, or Americans about slavery, have never been asked here.

Yet perhaps these crimes do linger in the murky recesses of the collective unconscious. It's at least one way to explain the knee-jerk racism of "Bingo Bongos," the weird continued popularity of the obscenely jolly Fascist song "Faccetta Nera" (Little Black Face). But you have to wonder: does the Berlusconi government really not understand that in a world in which Barack Obama is president of the United States, a G-8 country that pursues racist policies risks becoming a pariah nation?

* * *

Emmanuel Bonsu Foster needed an operation to save his eye. He has received many death threats and is seeing a psychologist, unable to go back to work or his studies. At least he's alive, unlike Abdul Salam Guibre. Born in Burkina Faso, naturalized an Italian citizen, Guibre, 19, died in Milan in September. Two owners of a mobile street bar, father and son, beat him to death because they thought he had stolen a packet of biscuits.

Racism, they insisted, had nothing to do with it. ■

Germany's Turkish Obama

by PAUL HOCKENOS

Berlin

Cem Özdemir is referred to as Germany's Obama, even if the 43-year-old Green politician modestly downplays the comparison. But the parallels are, at least in part, legitimate: Özdemir is the son of Turkish immigrants and, as newly elected co-chair of the Greens, the highest-ranking German politician with foreign-born parents.

IGOR KOPELNITSKY

The Özdemirs came to West Germany in the early 1960s with millions of other Turks, Greeks, Italians and Yugoslavs who provided the booming economies of Northern Europe with badly needed unskilled labor. While most of the "guest workers" returned to their homelands as planned, many others stayed on, brought their families to join them or started new ones, and haltingly put down roots. Today in Germany there are 15 million "people with migration background," the new PC term that designates people residing in Germany as of 1950 who were born abroad, as well as their offspring. This is 19 percent of the population; in major western German cities children with migration backgrounds make up 40 percent of all elementary school students. Roughly half of these people have German citizenship (and thus are no longer de jure "foreigners," the old, non-PC term). The largest group after ethnic Germans from Russia is the cohort with Turkish roots, the *Deutschtürken*, like the Özdemirs.

Cem Özdemir grew up in southwestern Germany, where he joined the Greens as a teenager—because of the party's environmental focus, not its multicultural ethos or liberal migration stance. In 1994 he became the first German Turk to enter the Bundestag (today twelve of 612 MPs have migration backgrounds, all of them in the left-wing parties). Since then Özde-

Paul Hockenos is a writer living in Berlin. His most recent book is Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany.

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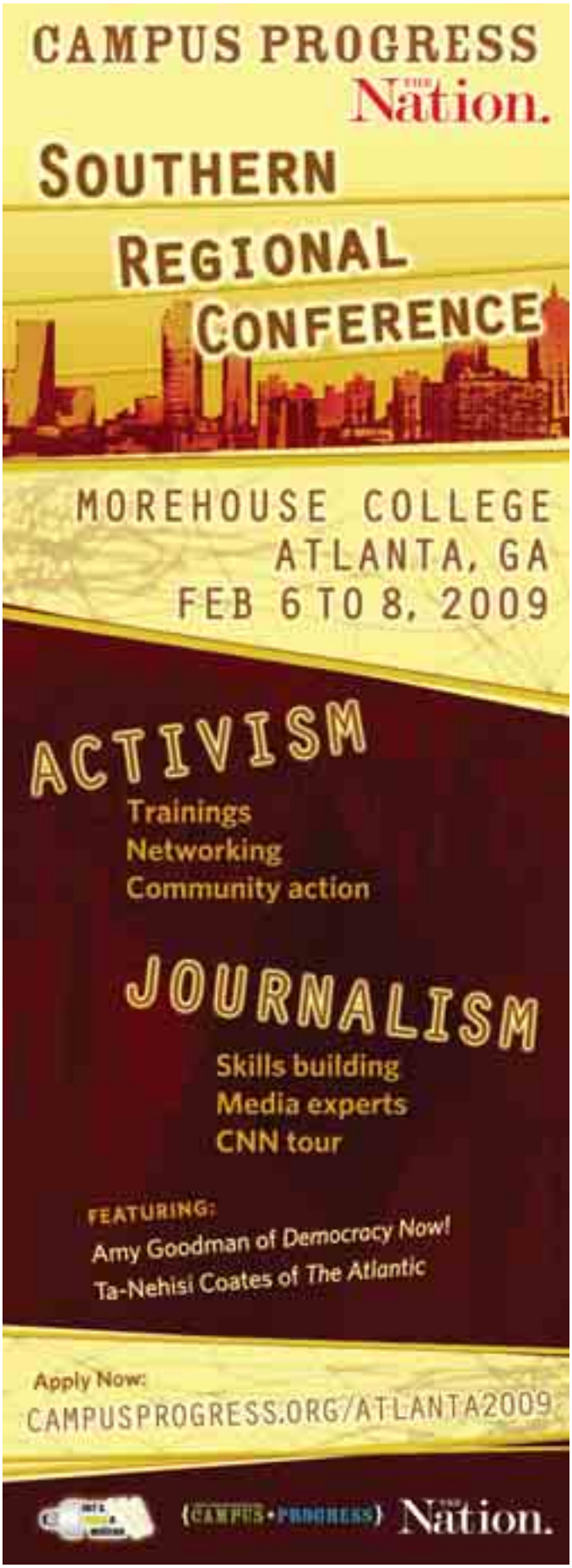

mir has soared through the ranks of the little ecological party, notably as a committed pragmatist, or in Green-speak a *Realo*, who leans toward free-market policies and endorses Germany's humanitarian interventions abroad.

Soft-spoken and clean-cut with thick, jet-black hair and long sideburns, Özdemir's initial reaction to Barack Obama's election victory was that it could serve as an inspiring model for organizing an array of marginalized groups, including migrant communities. "Obama," says the career social worker, "reached out to and mobilized groups that had been disenfranchised from politics in the US, particularly so many young people. We have to connect with young people who have a different conception of politics. They don't join political parties but communicate through digital political networks. We have to learn from the Obama campaign and use media like Facebook and YouTube. The Greens can do this too—especially the Greens." He says the Greens' coalition partners of choice, the (currently badly flagging) Social Democrats, would do well to learn a few lessons here as well, considering that they have failed so spectacularly of late—to the detriment of the "red-green" coalition option—to attract new and younger voters.

In his home neighborhood, Berlin's multicultural bastion of Kreuzberg, people stop Özdemir on the street to talk about politics. "Even if many of them wouldn't vote for the Greens," he says, conscious of his party's tepid appeal to immigrants, "they see me as someone with similar roots. They say, We are part of this society too. These institutions and political parties are ours too. Kids look at me and say, Hey, we can do the same, be it in politics or law or medicine or whatever."

The history of Germany's relationship with its postwar immigrants and their subsequent generations is not one of the Federal Republic's bright spots. Neither ordinary Germans nor most of the political elite regarded the labor migrants as a net gain for German society, even if the newcomers learned German, renounced their foreign citizenship and jumped through all the considerable hoops to naturalize. Germany's *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) law made citizenship difficult even for German-born children of émigrés, like the Özdemirs, who may have lived in Germany for decades. (Cem became a German at 18, when he returned his Turkish passport and met the other requirements—just in time to avoid military conscription in a country he knew mainly from summer visits.)

Despite their longtime residence in Germany, immigrant families remain stuck on the bottom rung of the social ladder. The lowest level of the three-tier German secondary school system, for example, is packed with children with migration backgrounds. Upon graduation, they are lucky to land even the lowest-paid, unskilled jobs, the kind their fathers took on as cold war–era guest workers. Over the years the migrant communities have faced racism, social exclusion, job discrimination and even violence. Özdemir may be the poster boy of integration in Germany, but he's definitely the exception.

The very definition of being German is the key battleground for the cluster of issues—education, social and labor policies, cultural politics, EU expansion and of course immigration—that inform Germany's relationship with its immigrants and their descendants. Conservatives still fight for an exclusive, Christian, ethnically based concept of Germanness. On the campaign trail they have won votes with jingoistic outbursts

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against "foreign-born criminals" and the supposed "flood" of immigrants. In 1999 the Social Democrat/Green government liberalized the jus sanguinis nationality law and scaled back the residency period required for citizenship. But over the Greens' strenuous objections the new law ruled out dual citizenship for residents from non-EU countries, including Turkey.

Even though the new conditions for citizenship opened the door somewhat to immigrants, as did the red-green government's moderate immigration reforms, there was neither an explosion of naturalizations nor a tidal wave of immigration. (Just about every German demographer admits that the declining birthrates make it imperative that Germany introduce regular immigration, something conservatives have blocked.) Many Turks find it difficult to give up their Turkish citizenship and "become German"—especially when it in no way guarantees respect, professional advancement or inclusion. But without German citizenship they cannot vote, and marginalization becomes a *fait accompli*. According to surveys, half of German Turks feel "unwanted," even though they feel Germany is more home than Turkey. There is simply not enough incentive or trust in the system for them to give up their native nationality.

"There is deep resistance in Germany to the kind of changes necessary to open German society to the immigrant communities here," explains Ahmet Iyidirli of the Federation of Turkish Social Democrats in Germany, a campaigner for voting rights for resident nonnationals. "There has to be a full-blown change in mentality, on both sides," he says, acknowledging that many people with Turkish roots have not tried to integrate into German society and engage in the political process. Some of Germany's migrant communities still live in isolated enclaves, with highly conservative and patriarchal family structures. And many Turkish men still travel back to the homeland to find a wife.

Together with friends at the Club of Turkish Social Democrats in Kreuzberg last year, Iyidirli says, he was spellbound watching Obama's March 18 speech on race. "It was so direct, so in-your-face, I initially thought he'd alienate white voters," says Iyidirli, who for years shied away from using the term "racism" in the German context. Among the euphemisms usually employed are "antiforeigner sentiment," "xenophobia" and "right-wing extremism." Even in his own party he has been criticized as "radical" and "unconstructive" for talking about racism. "It is racism and you have to call it that," says Iyidirli, who, though having German citizenship for twenty-three years and having run for a seat in the Bundestag, is still not treated—or thought of—as a German. "This problem has to be tackled head-on, and Germany has to change," he says. "I wish it for Germany."

Might a *Deutschtürke* like Özdemir or Iyidirli one day become chancellor? If so, the prospect lies in the distant future; for now, people with migration backgrounds remain very poorly represented in the major parties. Perhaps a cabinet post is the next step. But judging by the electoral troubles of the parties most likely to furnish such a pioneer, this too could be a long time in coming. ■

Slumdog President

by LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY

Bangalore

"He'll never win," declared my father-in-law with glum certainty, as I sat sweltering in the Indian heat in early September. "The Americans may want to elect him, but in the end they won't do it. He's a good man, but he's black."

IGOR KOPELNITSKY

More noteworthy than his cynicism is his unstinting support for a man who shares so little of his worldview. My father-in-law isn't exactly a flaming liberal, yet like most educated middle- to upper-class Indians, he has developed a firm, near-irrational affection for a man known entirely through mostly admiring news articles and sound bites.

Over the past six months, the Indian media have displayed the classic signs of Obamamania that have become so familiar to most Americans: glowing editorials marking his "historic" nomination and election, an endless stream of advice from sympathetic pundits (including one columnist who suggested Obama take his cues from the Indian cricket team, no less), quirky stories about devoted fans (who in India seemed to prefer organizing *pujas* to meet-ups) and a tabloidlike obsession with his personality, his wife and kids, and most recently his hot bod.

The enthusiasm reflected in ad hoc street interviews and the rare opinion poll may not be representative—not in a country that remains largely rural—but it is hard to dismiss. Among those who know and care about US elections, Obama was indeed the favorite. Most reporters searched in vain for a McCain supporter—at least anyone who would admit to it—at the many election parties organized in cities like Delhi and Bangalore.

The level of good will is all the more remarkable for a man who may well end up—as most analysts here worry—on the wrong side of the issues the Indian middle class holds most dear: outsourcing, the Bush-sponsored nuclear deal and Kashmir/Pakistan. Most editorials cited Obama's opposition to Bush's policies, the very policies that made the soon-to-be former president more popular in India than in most other places in the world. These doubts about an Obama administration have not been ignored. The same editorials are laced with unease about his policy positions, and his passing suggestion

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that the United States should step in to help resolve the Kashmir dispute raised hackles all around.

But the skepticism has so far been overwhelmed by the undisguised pleasure of seeing a brown-skinned underdog triumph against all odds over a white establishment. While the narrative has universal appeal—not just for Indians and not just because they're not white—the affection for Obama in India is tied inextricably to his race. The day after his victory, all the major newspaper headlines told the same story: Obama Reclaims American Dream; A Dream Alive in Our Time; Change Has Come to America; Race Ends in Historic Win: Dark Knight in White House. Responding to a ten-ton sand sculpture of Obama's face created by a local artist and a team of schoolchildren in Puri, one local told reporters, "It is natural that everybody wants change. He is the historical figure in the world itself, as no black person has ever become the US president."

Many Indians believe Obama's victory makes all things possible for people of color everywhere—including the many American grandchildren, nieces, nephews and cousins who, thanks to globalization, are part of the Indian extended family. "My granddaughter can now be president of the United States," boasted a university professor who was shopping at the local mall in Bangalore, echoing the sentiments of my mother, an aunt and her neighbor.

And yet for all the rhetoric about America's racist history, Indians have preferred to avoid any mention of our ever-present racism. There's been nary a word on the cognitive dissonance between all this Obama-love in a culture that refers to people of African origin as *habshis*, an epithet as offensive as the N-word. Like all well-indoctrinated postcolonial subjects, most Indians regard Africans with contempt for being poor, "backward" and, above all, black—a cardinal sin in a nation obsessed with skin color. ("Fairness" creams remain the top-selling cosmetic on the Indian market.) Sure, Obama was one of "us" when he was running for president. But he wouldn't be if he were one of the many African students in, say, Delhi struggling to rent an apartment or hail a cab.

If the Obama candidacy evoked an overdue and necessary discussion about racism in America, perhaps it's time that it did the same in other parts of the world—be it in India, Russia or France. There are plenty of cute and heartwarming stories about Indians and Obama, but a more telling example is the response of our cook, the well-meaning, kind, chocolate-skinned Mary. When I told her a black man was now the president of the United States, she looked confused and a little uncertain. "And is this a good thing?" she asked. Answering that question is likely as good a place to start as any. ■

Holding Bush Accountable

The abuses and crimes of the outgoing administration demand scrutiny and prosecution.

by ELIZABETH HOLTZMAN

President Obama, on his first day in office, can make a number of changes that will mark a clean break with the Bush presidency. He can, and should, issue an executive order revoking any prior order that permits detainee mistreatment by any government agency. He should begin the process of closing Guantánamo, and he should submit to Congress a bill to end the use of military commissions, at least as presently constituted. Over the coming months he can pursue other reforms to restore respect for the Constitution, such as revising the Patriot Act, abolishing secret prisons and "extraordinary rendition," and ending practices, like signing statements, that seek to undo laws.

While these steps are all crucial, however, it is not enough merely to cease the abuses of power and apparent criminality that marked the highest levels of George W. Bush's administration. We cannot simply shrug off the constitutional and criminal misbehavior of the administration, treat it as an aberration and hope it won't happen again. The misbehavior was not an aberration—aspects of it, particularly the idea that the president is above the law, were present in Watergate and in the Iran/Contra scandal. To fully restore the rule of law and prevent any repetition of Bush's misconduct, the abuses of his administration must be directly confronted. As Indiana University law professor Dawn Johnsen—recently tapped by Obama to head his Office of Legal Counsel—wrote in *Slate* last March, "We must avoid any temptation simply to move on. We must instead be honest with ourselves and the world as we condemn our

JANNA BROWER

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nation's past transgressions and reject Bush's corruption of our American ideals."

What we need to do is conceptually simple. We need to launch investigations to get at the central unanswered questions of Bush's abuse of power, commence criminal proceedings and undertake institutional, statutory and constitutional reforms. Perhaps all these things don't need to be done at once, but over time—not too much time—they must take place. Otherwise, we establish a doctrine of presidential impunity, which has no place in a country that cherishes the rule of law or considers itself a democracy. Bush's claim that the president enjoys virtually unlimited power as commander in chief at a time of war—which Vice President Dick Cheney defiantly reasserted just last month—brought us perilously close to military dictatorship.

As the former district attorney in Brooklyn, New York, I know the price society pays for a doctrine of impunity. Failure to prosecute trivializes and encourages the crimes. The same holds true of political abuses—failure to hold violators accountable condones the abuse and entrenches its acceptability, creating a climate in which it is likely to be repeated. The doctrine of impunity suggests, too, that there is a dual system of justice—one for the powerful and one for ordinary Americans. Because the concept of equal justice under the law is the foundation of democracy, impunity for high-level officials who abuse power and commit crimes erodes our democracy.

An impeachment proceeding against President Bush would have been the proper forum to expose the full scope of his abuses and to impose punishment. That obviously didn't happen, but investigations and prosecutions can still provide the vast civics lesson that an impeachment process would have given our nation.

There is another important reason for not "moving on." On January 20, Barack Obama will take an oath of office to uphold the Constitution, which requires the president to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." Much as President Obama might like to avoid controversy arising from investigations and prosecutions of high-level Bush administration officials, he cannot let them get away with breaking the law without violating his oath. His obligation to pursue justice in these cases is all the more serious given his acknowledgment that waterboarding is torture—which is a federal crime—and the vice president's recent admission of his involvement in and approval of "enhanced" interrogation techniques.

Moreover, under the Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture, our government is obliged to bring to justice those who have violated the conventions. Although Bush smugly ignored his constitutional duty to enforce treaty obligations and laws that punish detainee mistreatment, Obama cannot follow the same lawless path.

Investigations

The Iraq War, the torture and mistreatment of detainees, and the wiretapping and US Attorney scandals of the Bush administration merit new and full investigations that could be carried out singly or together and could be conducted by Congress or an outside commission.

The Iraq War has been a tragic mistake for America. More than 4,000 Americans have been killed, more than 30,000 wounded and the financial cost is expected to exceed $1 trillion. The cost to Iraqis in lives and destruction is much greater. This war was not just unnecessary; it was based on false claims. We were told we were justified in striking at Iraq because it posed the threat of weapons of mass destruction and because Saddam Hussein was in cahoots with Al Qaeda, which attacked us on 9/11. Those statements, as we now know, were blatantly untrue.

Despite several Congressional investigations, we never learned whether President Bush knew that the justifications for the war were untrue and whether he deliberately lied to drive the country into the war.

There are many indications that he did know. The Downing Street memo officially recorded a briefing given to British Prime Minister Tony Blair in July 2002 by his top intelligence official, who had just returned from meetings in Washington, eight months before the war began. According to the memo, Blair was told that the United States had already decided to remove Saddam and that the intelligence was going to be "fixed" around the policy. At the first National Security Council meeting in 2001, two years before the United States went to war, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill was astonished to find that the decision to invade Iraq had already been made—the question, he said, was not whether but when. Finally, the Senate Intelligence Committee not long ago found that most of the claims made for the need to go to war were not borne out by information in the possession of US intelligence agencies.

President Obama cannot let former Bush administration officials get away with breaking the law without violating his own oath.

A 9/11 kind of commission or committees of Congress must commence an investigation to get at the truth of the presidential deceptions related to the war. Whether President Bush knowingly deceived us needs to be fully explored and exposed; if he did, he will at the very least have to carry that burden of disgrace permanently. Precisely because other presidents lied about warmaking—think of Lyndon Johnson and the Gulf of Tonkin resolution and Richard Nixon and the secret bombing of Cambodia—we know that future presidents will be tempted to do the same. Investigating and exposing the role of President Bush and his team in the deceptions causing the Iraq War may discourage future presidents from taking the same path.

Similarly, investigations need to be conducted into the torture and mistreatment of detainees held by the US government. The numerous investigations ordered by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the wake of the Abu Ghraib disclosures obfuscated the question of responsibility at the highest level. They conveniently did not probe the role of the president; vice president; Justice Department officials, including the attorney general; or other cabinet secretaries. They also did not look at the actions of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The mistreatment was recently confirmed by the Senate

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Armed Services Committee, which in a bipartisan report found that it was initially traceable to President Bush's removal of Geneva Convention protections from members of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and was a direct result of actions taken by Rumsfeld.

Full inquiries into responsibility for torture and mistreatment, however, need to be undertaken by a commission outside Congress, since some members of the House and Senate appear to have been apprised by the administration of the torture while it was going on and may have approved it. Members of Congress might be reluctant to sit in judgment of their colleagues, and in any case there would be a serious problem of appearances if they did.

Detainee mistreatment and torture have inflamed anti-American sentiment throughout the world, creating added risks to our soldiers and to Americans everywhere. Indeed, Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo have become rallying cries and recruitment tools for Al Qaeda. Revealing and documenting the whole story of detainee mistreatment, including the role of the CIA and the president and vice president, would go a long way toward changing public opinion about America at home and abroad.

Full inquiries into responsibility for torture and mistreatment need to be undertaken by a commission outside Congress.

The Bush administration's wiretapping program must also be reviewed. Although Congress has watered down the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), it is important to understand the nature and scope of the intrusions into Americans' privacy under the program. As much information as possible, limited only by what is absolutely essential to protect national security, must be made public. For example, we do not yet know whether journalists, lawyers, political opponents and the like were subjected to wiretaps or other intrusions.

Investigations also need to be conducted into the president's role in the US Attorney scandal and the role of his aides Karl Rove and Harriet Miers and his Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. It appears that certain US Attorneys were removed from office solely because they failed to bring baseless prosecutions against Democrats in the 2006 election year, and that other US Attorneys were appointed to bring baseless prosecutions. The misuse of our criminal justice system for electoral ends is a grave abuse of power, and the facts behind the scandal must be uncovered.

In connection with the conviction of I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby for obstruction of justice, the administration classified the notes from the FBI's interview of Vice President Cheney. Those notes need to be declassified so the country can better understand the role he and the president played in the effort to "out" a clandestine CIA employee in retaliation for her husband's public claims that President Bush was taking the country to war under false pretexts. The FBI's notes of the president's interview should be made public as well.

Prosecutions

Some of the abuses of power in which President Bush and the top members of his team engaged may well constitute crimes.

Violation of FISA is a felony, and we know, through his own admissions, that Bush failed on at least forty occasions to obtain court approval for the wiretaps, despite the clear requirement of the statute that he do so. He even authorized wiretapping when the Justice Department refused to sign off on its legality. Subsequently the president worked with the FISA court to obtain authorization for the special program—a fact that strongly suggests court authorization could have been obtained much earlier, if not from the outset. Similarly, the president was able to persuade Congress to weaken the FISA protections a number of months ago. That shows that the president could have asked Congress to change the law from the outset (as he did with other parts of FISA). Instead, Bush took it upon himself brazenly and repeatedly to violate the law, authorizing wiretap after wiretap without seeking FISA court approval or revisions in the statute. No person, including a president, should be able to disobey the law this way.

Violation of the Anti-Torture Act is also a felony. This statute bars any US citizen from committing or attempting to commit torture abroad. Those who conspire with or aid and abet the torturers are penalized. The statute carries the death penalty when death results from the torture, and thus in those cases there is no statute of limitations on prosecution.

Undoubtedly Bush will claim that there should be no prosecution because the anti-torture statute cannot limit his powers as commander in chief. He may also claim that the mistreatment of detainees that was authorized did not constitute torture. Neither of these positions is a fatal bar to prosecution. The Supreme Court has ruled that a president's powers as commander in chief do not override statutes. And waterboarding, which the administration acknowledges took place (but on only three people), has long been viewed as torture.

If the investigations show that President Bush deliberately deceived the country about the Iraq War, then a determination should be made as to whether the lies are prosecutable under federal law. If so, a criminal proceeding on these grounds should be commenced.

The investigations and prosecutions should be conducted by one or more special prosecutors, since the Justice Department would have a serious conflict in prosecuting people who may claim to have followed its guidance or who were members of the department facilitating the torture.

The decision to prosecute Bush and lower-level officials who acted at the president's behest may seem too weighty to place in the hands of one person, no matter how seasoned, fair and reputable a prosecutor he or she may be, without establishing a full context for the prosecutions. After all, almost eight years of abuses have gone by with only a few whispers from the political establishment and the mainstream media about the need for criminal prosecutions. For that reason,

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designated Congressional committees or an outside commission should pursue inquiries into presidential abuses, particularly those that may also constitute crimes. These inquiries, which should not interfere with any criminal prosecutions, should aim to give the public an understanding of why the Bush Administration's actions are so grave and why the defense that a president may take the law into his own hands is unacceptable.

Reforms

The most pressing reform involves the War Crimes Act of 1996, which would be a more effective tool for prosecuting detainee mistreatment than the Anti-Torture Act. The president and other top officials were concerned about prosecution under that act, which makes cruel and inhuman treatment of detainees a federal crime. Like the anti-torture statute, it carries the death penalty when death results from the mistreatment, which means there is no statute of limitations. Administration officials might think they can avoid criminal liability under the Anti-Torture Act by claiming the mistreatment isn't torture (as in President Bush's oft-repeated claim that we "don't do torture"); but they know that they can't avoid liability under the War Crimes Act, because "harsh" interrogation techniques—waterboarding, stress positions, threatening dogs, exposure to temperature extremes—are all clearly cruel and inhuman. They can't get around the War Crimes Act with definitional tricks.

Following White House counsel Alberto Gonzales's advice in January 2002 about how to "reduce the likelihood of prosecution" under the War Crimes Act, President Bush opted out of the Geneva Conventions for members of Al Qaeda. Administration officials apparently thought this would enable them to avoid liability for mistreating those prisoners, because the War Crimes Act was intended to enforce the Geneva Conventions. But then the Supreme Court ruled in summer 2006 that the Geneva Conventions applied to Al Qaeda detainees, and the administration realized that something had to be done to prevent criminal liability under the act. So it quietly inserted a provision into the Military Commissions Act in October 2006 that made the War Crimes Act retroactively inoperative—meaning that past violations could not be prosecuted.

Retroactively nullifying the War Crimes Act was one of the Bush administration's most cynical acts with respect to the rule of law. In essence, it issued a blanket pardon to anyone who had violated the War Crimes Act, including the president and vice president. There was no examination of the facts of any particular case. The violations, whether egregious or minor, were swept under the rug. No one was ever to be called to account. The crimes were made to disappear—*poof*. This maneuver may be the worst embodiment of the doctrine of impunity for high-level government officials in our history. It cannot be allowed to stand.

Fortunately, the retroactive nullification can be undone and the original law resurrected. Once the War Crimes Act is restored, a special prosecutor should determine whether and how to prosecute under the act. But even if no prosecutions are brought against President Bush and his team, by restoring the original law, we put an end to the horrific situation in which a criminal statute is decriminalized after crimes are

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committed to protect people in the highest offices.

A second reform is limiting the president's pardon power. This must be done by constitutional amendment. One of the ways a president can execute illegal schemes is to assure subordinates that they will not face criminal liability. To prevent this kind of high-level conspiracy, the amendment should prohibit a president from pardoning anyone he or she appointed to office, or the vice president. Prohibitions against self-pardoning or pardoning in return for a bribe should also be clearly spelled out in the amendment.

A third reform would re-enact legislation creating a special prosecutor for crimes committed by high-level government officials. The original law was allowed to expire after the sorry excesses of special prosecutor Kenneth Starr. A new statute, devised to prevent such excesses, would permit prosecution of officials when the Justice Department cannot or will not investigate—as happened repeatedly during the Bush era. (The appointment of Patrick Fitzgerald in the Valerie Plame leak case was fortuitous; the attorney general was incapacitated, so the power to appoint a special prosecutor fell to a nonpolitical professional prosecutor.) The problem extends beyond the Bush administration: no attorney general can be expected to investigate the president who appointed him or her.

Sooner or later, America will confront the abuses of the Bush presidency head-on. The only question is whether we will wait for years—as Chile did with respect to bringing Gen. Augusto Pinochet to justice—or do it now, sending a clear signal that our country is back on track and firmly embraces the rule of law. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

flawed. To my knowledge, the biggest players—Mercedes-Benz, GM's Opel, Ford Europe, Volvo, Saab, Peugeot and Fiat—were never in public hands after the war. Renault was nationalized but has now been mostly privatized. The story for the Nazi-founded VW is the same, and the remaining public stake is under attack from EU authorities.

Nationalization has nothing to do with the codetermination rights of German workers, nor were they an achievement of the "Socialists." German workers (not unions) have a legal right to representation in the policy-setting supervisory boards of all significant enterprises. The law was introduced after the war, when the Allies wanted to create a labor counterweight to a management that had collaborated with Nazism. The same laws also kept unions at arm's length by setting up elected councils to negotiate with the employer—unions have to act like political parties to get their members elected. Many councils contain nonunion representatives, and because the company controls the purse strings, a wedge between national unions and plant representatives is easily created. These proposals were initially controversial: consequent socialists opposed them. Now, of course, SD party and union leaders extol them as great achievements.

Somehow objectivity and judgment decline when progressives look across the Atlantic. Europeans, confronted with their uninspiring politicians, were easy prey for Obama's hope and change rhetoric. Americans nostalgically drag up the socialist triumphs of yesteryear. There is a lot to learn, but it requires a hard look at the realities of the situation on both sides of the Atlantic.

Peter Unterweger

Schiffrin Replies

New York City

Peter Unterweger is in such a rush to criticize Europe's Social Democrats that he has missed much of what I was trying to say.

First and foremost, my article was a look at what had been achieved since 1945, looking for solutions that still made sense to Obama's America. It was not an analysis of today's Social Democratic parties, many of whose policies I would agree need criticism from the left. Indeed, that is precisely what has been happening in recent years. In France, Besancenot's new anticapitalist alliance—as *The Nation* has noted—and, in Germany, Die Linke have been offering old-fashioned socialist alternatives to the more market-oriented policies accepted by many Social Democrats. This before the collapse of the Friedmanite ideology that America had been foisting on the rest of the world in recent years. It is safe to predict that the leftward pressures will grow in Europe in the coming months and, hopefully, in the United States.

On specifics, I noted that Blair had long ago abandoned basic Labour policies, although to dismiss old Labour as nonsocialist because of its Fabian origins seems a bit sectarian to me. Equally interesting is that many of the more conservative successors to the Social Democrats, in France and in Scandinavia, have been hesitant to tamper with much of the basic egalitarian changes I mentioned.

I never suggested that all automobile companies had been nationalized; I specified Renault and Volkswagen, whose very successful outcomes before privatization could well be studied as American companies are "restructured" at taxpayers' expense.

The German system of codetermination, or *Mitbestimmungsrecht*, was imposed on Germany after the war in an effort to democratize that country, largely because of the thinking of British Labour and American New Dealers planning occupation policy. It has many defenders. There is no room here to discuss Unterweger's critique, which I believe is not accepted by most on the German left.

The economic crisis has caused many to rethink the policies that too many, in Europe and America, have accepted in recent years. Those on the left have much to add from the socialist alternatives that have been tried in past decades.

André Schiffrin

Rock Around the Clock, Titania!

Boston

Joshua Jelly-Schapiro's excellent review of books about New Orleans, "In Congo Square" [Dec. 29], quotes H.C. Knight in 1819: "…the African slaves meet on the green, by the swamp, and rock the city with their Congo dances." According to the author under review, this is the first use of "rock" as a verb in this sense.

But what about Shakespeare, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? In Act IV, scene i, Oberon and Titania are reconciled, the humans still asleep in the forest. Oberon: "Sound, music! Come my queen, take hands with me,/And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be."

This is not to suggest that the Elizabethans invented rock 'n' roll in 1595; it's just that I've always liked that play and appreciate a chance to quote from it.

John Bergstrom

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Books & the Arts.

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George Plimpton at Ford Field in Detroit, September 2003

In His League

by SCOTT SHERMAN

In the summer of 1963, while most of his companions were toiling in sundry Manhattan offices, George Plimpton spent many a weekday alone in Central Park tossing a football. "Without someone to throw to," he later remembered, "it was a melancholy practice—to throw a ball in a park meadow and then walk to it, and throw it again—and I did it in a sort of dull, bored way." Plimpton hoped that his nonchalant bearing would convince the elderly men flying kites that he was merely awaiting the arrival of friends caught in a traffic jam. If the heat in the park was too intense, he would practice in his apartment—"a sort of studio, long enough to allow a throw into an armchair from twenty or twenty-five feet away."

Plimpton was in the grip of a quixotic notion: to become the "last-string quarterback" of the Detroit Lions. When he arrived at the Lions' training facility later that summer, he was greeted by the equipment manager, Friday Macklem, who declared, "I hear you're a writer turned footballer. You're going to play for us—making some sort of big comeback." "That's right," Plimpton replied in his patrician accent. Macklem shook his head: "Well, I've been with Detroit for twenty-seven years, dishing out uniforms all those years, and I know if I'd ever been tempted *into* one, I wouldn't be around to tell of it, for sure." Not only did Plimpton survive his foray into professional football, but he also produced a fine

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George, Being George
George Plimpton's Life as Told, Admired, Deplored, and Envied by 200 Friends, Relatives, Lovers, Acquaintances, Rivals—and a Few Unappreciative Observers.
By Nelson W. Aldrich Jr.
Random House. 423 pp. $30.

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book about it, *Paper Lion*, which enhanced his personal wealth and literary clout. The book sold extremely well, and Tom Wolfe included excerpts from it in his famous anthology *The New Journalism*, published in 1973.

As a "participatory journalist," Plimpton endeavored, in a wry, self-deprecating manner, to "play out the fantasies, the daydreams that so many people have." And so he had his nose bloodied by the boxer Archie Moore at Stillman's Gym; he was vanquished by Arnold Palmer on the golf course; he floated through the air on the trapeze for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus; he performed with the New York Philharmonic; he tried stand-up comedy in Las Vegas; he was a Bedouin extra in *Lawrence of Arabia*; he was shot by John Wayne in *Rio Lobo*; he pitched to nine players, including Willie Mays, during an unofficial postseason all-star game at Yankee Stadium. From this last endeavor came a slim book, *Out of My League*, which contained a blurb from Plimpton's hero, Ernest Hemingway, who praised it as "beautifully observed and incredibly conceived."

Reality sometimes intruded into Plimpton's daydreams. In 1968, when Sirhan Sirhan shot Robert Kennedy in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, Plimpton helped to wrestle the pistol from the assassin's hand. In *George, Being George*, Nelson Aldrich Jr.'s affectionate and absorbing oral history, we learn that Plimpton never wrote about Kennedy's slaying, but that many years later, over cocktails with young staff members of *The Paris Review*, the journal he had led since 1953, he burst into tears at the memory of it.

But distress and trauma were fleeting occurrences in the Plimptonian realm. Throughout five decades, the writer and editor, to a breathtaking degree, enacted his daydreams and fantasies and fashioned them into a glittering persona. He was "George Plimpton"—editor, host, naturalist, toastmaster, celebrity escort, fireworks specialist, athlete, gossip and playboy. (*Esquire* listed him as one of the most attractive men in America.) As Nathan Zuckerman declared in Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost*: "When people say to themselves 'I want to be happy,' they could as well be saying 'I want to be George Plimpton': one achieves, one is productive, and there's pleasure and ease in all of it." The friends, colleagues and associates of "George Plimpton" monitored it all with varying degrees of astonishment, amusement and distress. "I have a hard time having fun, period, and he was the paragon of fun," Richard Price says in *George, Being George*. "George knew so many more people than I did," Norman Mailer recalled, "he was having so much more fun in New York than I was having. I felt that whatever enjoyment I was having, I had earned; and there is nothing that excites envy like the feeling that you received no more than you earned, while there was George, who had received so much more than he had earned."

Plimpton was born in Manhattan in 1927 and raised in a Fifth Avenue duplex with views of the East River and the Central Park Reservoir. His lineage was equally commanding. His great-grandfather Adelbert Ames was the youngest general in the Civil War and subsequently became a Reconstruction governor of Mississippi. His grandfather George Arthur Plimpton earned a fortune as a textbook publisher and served on the boards of the New York Philharmonic, Exeter and Barnard. His father, Francis T.P. Plimpton, was a partner at the white-shoe law firm Debevoise & Plimpton and a man whose favorite lecture at the family dinner table concerned "the beauty of the mortgage indenture."

At Harvard, Plimpton joined the *Lampoon* and met Archibald MacLeish and F.O. Matthiessen.

Family summers were spent near Walt Whitman's birthplace in leafy West Hills, a tight WASP community of lawyers, brokers, bankers and architects on Long Island. The years passed in a whirl of touch football, tennis, swimming, bicycling and Ping-Pong. "My parents lived in the same small tribal community as the Plimptons," George's cousin Joan Ames told Aldrich. "I remember this little telephone table in my parents' bedroom that held the *Social Register*; it was the only phone book we ever used." George was not a reclusive child. "Our parents entertained there a lot," his younger brother Oakes recalled. "George came by his social appetites honestly—our parents were very social people—but I guess he outdid them and then some."

Francis T.P. Plimpton placed a high premium on a certain kind of education, and George began his schooling at St. Bernard's, next door to the family's apartment building. His classmates included Charles Morgan, J.P. Morgan's grandson, and Arthur Sulzberger, scion of the *New York Times*. Aldrich recounts a story about a weekend trip Plimpton made with Sulzberger to the country, in a chauffeured limousine that got a flat tire:

> What followed was not the worst of George's lifetime of mortifications, but he vividly recalled his squirming embarrassment in the backseat as the chauffeur got out of the car and set about changing the tire. He remembered how the tails of the man's black uniform jacket flapped crazily in the wind of the passing traffic and how the sweat stood out on his face as he worked the jack up and down, up and down, while the rear of the car, with the little boys safe in their soft gray seats, went up, up, up.

Family ties to Exeter—his father chaired the board of trustees—facilitated George's arrival there in 1940, and he soon distinguished himself with his manners and sophistication, and his skill in athletics. He did not excel in the classroom, perhaps because, as a friend offers, "his mind was not set up for strict schedules." For disregarding curfew, Plimpton was placed on disciplinary probation; and for aiming a Revolutionary musket at the football coach, he was expelled.

He made it to Harvard nevertheless—"It was a little easier to get into Harvard in those days," Oakes Plimpton says—and arrived in 1944. He joined the *Lampoon*, immersed himself in the Porcellian Club and got acquainted with Archibald MacLeish, I.A. Richards and F.O. Matthiessen, whose company deepened his interest in literature and the arts. He began to ponder a career in publishing. When he decided to pursue graduate study in English in Britain, his father was not excluded from the application process. "May I again say," George wrote in a letter to his parents, "that I am more particularly interested in Cambridge at the moment, and the epistolary offensive should be directed towards that University." As usual, things went his way, and in the fall of 1950 Mr. and Mrs. Plimpton received a letter from their son about the new heights he had scaled abroad: "There is no mountain climbing here, East Anglia being notoriously flat, but there is a wonderful sport called roof-climbing."

Founded in 1953, *The Paris Review* was the brainchild of two young expatriates, Harold ("Doc") Humes and Peter Matthiessen, who met in Paris in the winter of 1951–52. Humes was a mentally unbalanced former Navy cook who fled the United States in 1948 because, as he once declared, "the alternative to leaving was suicide or madness." He wandered through the city's summer heat dressed in a wool suit and

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homburg and sporting a silver-handled cane. Matthiessen was a handsome, gifted and supremely confident graduate of Yale (class of 1950). Born eight weeks after Plimpton, he also enjoyed a velvet upbringing. The son of a prominent architect, he was raised in Manhattan and Stamford, Connecticut—indeed, his parents owned an apartment in the same building where Plimpton grew up, 1165 Fifth Avenue—and he was in Plimpton's class at St. Bernard's. In 1952 he invited Plimpton, who was still in England, to come to Paris and assume the editorship of a new literary journal, which George agreed to do.

From the start, the founders of *The Paris Review* endeavored to navigate a course between *The Kenyon Review*, which favored a form of academically inflected criticism that, as William Styron proclaimed in the inaugural issue of *The Paris Review*, smothered literature "under the weight of learned chatter," and *Partisan Review*, whose editors had been tested by the literary polemics and ideological fisticuffs of the 1930s. Instead of learned criticism, or scrappy essays in the vein of Philip Rahv, the fledgling *Paris Review* decided to publish what Styron called "creative work"—fiction, poetry, art. And instead of conversing about literature in the lofty tone of the critic, the editors, in a marvelous stroke of insight, decided that they would speak directly to the finest writers, in tightly edited Q&A interviews, where the muse could dance on the page:

> INTERVIEWER: Are there devices one can use in improving one's technique?
> CAPOTE: Work is the only device I know of. Writing has laws of perspective, of light and shade, just as painting does, or music. If you are born knowing them, fine. If not, learn them. Then rearrange the rules to suit yourself.

There is no better guide to the art of writing than the stray volumes of *Paris Review* interviews, whose sprightly pages constitute a voluble history of twentieth-century English-language literature.

Plimpton & Co. avoided wading into the muck of politics. Robert Silvers, who met Plimpton in Paris in 1954 and would soon become a *Paris Review* editor, told Aldrich he was struck by a tone-setting essay of John Train's in the first issue: "He pointedly seemed to avoid such matters as the bitter controversy between Sartre and Camus that was dividing Paris intellectuals at the time." *The Paris Review* was the antithesis of another Paris-based journal, *Merlin*, whose expat editors included Alexander Trocchi and Richard Seaver, and which promised to "hit

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at all clots of rigid categories in criticism and life." Seaver notes: "Trocchi used to try and get George more interested in the political concerns of Europe and our country, but George could not get existentially involved in that. He was a terribly positive person, even if postwar Paris wasn't." Over the years, the decidedly literary bent of *The Paris Review* would leave some admirers disenchanted. "How is it," John Leonard wrote in 1981, "that *The Paris Review*—unlike, say, *Partisan Review*, which has been around considerably longer—seems so tangential to the politics of its portion of the 20th century…?"

Having chosen a purely literary path, how well did the editors acquit themselves? By and large, they leaned toward the conventional and the canonical. They had no desire to brush up against the avant-garde or the law, as Margaret Anderson did by serializing *Ulysses* in *Little Review* before its book publication in 1922, a decision that incurred the wrath of the US Post Office—which found some parts of the work obscene and refused to distribute copies of the magazine—and altered the course of fiction. We remember *The Dial* because it published T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, early drafts of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, the scintillating poems and prose of Marianne Moore and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. The editors of *The Paris Review* made no discoveries of that caliber: for the most part they preferred to reinforce reputations rather than scout young talent. Still, no one can sneer at their choices in the '50s and early '60s: stories by Philip Roth later included in *Goodbye, Columbus*; the first English translations of Italo Calvino; early work by Nadine Gordimer, Richard Yates and Stanley Elkin. If *The Paris Review* was not always wildly adventurous—Gerald Howard has persuasively argued that Ted Solotaroff's *New American Review* surpassed *The Paris Review*, and every other literary journal, between 1967 and 1977—it was consistently impressive.

Black Sun

Inferno happened when Dante explained to us how
he functions sexually.
Before then, it did not exist.
And Petrarch.
Who like a green dog on four wet, dark-green legs
sniffs Vaucluse and touches his clothes.
He thinks about the books his father
burnt, not about Laura.
It has to do with the race.
Who is faster.
God with his sand or we with our tongue.
Sand is the tongue of fire.
Tongue is the fire of sand.
Fire is the sand of God.
I'm falling.
I fall like an oak doomed to die, and also
women want to be more than metaphor.
With their moist, round, soft skin, with their
drunken scent of warm mushrooms they drive me insane.
Walls of hell, why do you stagger.
I miss the smell of burnt flesh.
Nature makes me tired.
It tires me so terribly that I sink in a cave.
Stars move apart.
I am the Sun.
With no air.
Fake fire falls upon the children's black hair,
advancing into their hearts so they burst like buckles.
Their mouths yawn open as if they were mummies.
They rave in benediction, they gargle my
name as I get dressed.
When I adjust my collar in front of him—the mirror—
everything is already late.

TOMAZ SALAMUN

(translated from the Slovenian by Peter Richards and Ana Jelnikar)

Plimpton moved back to Manhattan in 1955, followed by others in the *Paris Review* circle. They returned "not in the melancholy mood of Malcolm Cowley's exiles of the Twenties, who were forced home during the early currents of the crash," Gay Talese noted in a famous article in *Esquire* in 1956, "but rather with the attitude that the party would now shift to the other side of the Atlantic." Plimpton's home at 541 East Seventy-second Street became the epicenter of "the *Paris Review* crowd." *George, Being George* contains a famous photograph of a party that Plimpton hosted in 1963: the male guests, neatly outfitted in suits and ties, included Styron, Gore Vidal, Jonathan Miller, Truman Capote, Arthur Penn, Mario Puzo and a stiff-looking Ralph Ellison, the only nonwhite face in the room. In the foreground is Plimpton, dashingly at ease, clutching a cocktail. Gazing at this photo, you begin to get a sense of why James Baldwin, who spent eight days in a Paris jail in 1949 after being falsely accused of stealing a hotel bedsheet, was moved to dismiss the *Paris Review* crowd as a circle of wealthy dilettantes. Still, at least guests didn't have to be wealthy or famous to be admitted to Plimpton's parties. Geoffrey Gates explains that, following his departure from the Marine Corps in the late 1950s and his subsequent expulsion from his mother's house, he moved in with a friend of Plimpton's, who recounted the revelry to Gates: "'What we've got here are a lot of young editors and writers, and a lot of girls, and all the liquor you could drink.' I said, 'I'm very interested.'"

For Jules Feiffer, those gatherings marked the eclipse of McCarthyism and nascent stirrings of a new generation: "George's literary world," Feiffer says in *George, Being George*, "was part of a general cultural revolt—against conformity, against sexual constraint." Anne Roiphe's memories tilt toward the sardonic: "Most of the time everybody was too drunk

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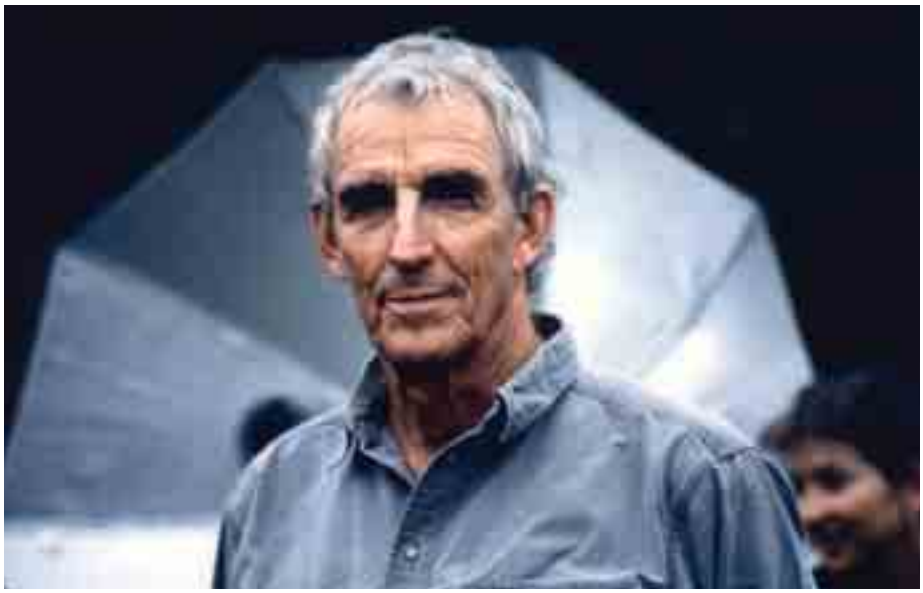
to be brilliant," she says. "It was more about one big bull bumping up against another big bull." By the early 1960s, Plimpton's salon—along with his expanding portfolio of journalism and his social connections to the Kennedys—helped to cement his celebrity status. Guests on their way home from 541 East Seventy-second would be greeted by taxi drivers inquiring, "Is that George Plimpton's building?"

Plimpton's annexation of Manhattan's social universe set him apart from some of the other early members of *The Paris Review* circle—including Peter Matthiessen, who was beginning to adopt a more obstreperous and combative stance toward the establishment. "I remember being present many years ago, in the 50's, when by chance [Matthiessen] discovered his name was still in the *Social Register*," William Styron told *The New York Times Magazine* in 1990. "I remember his rage at finding it there, and his determination to get it out." By the late 1950s, Matthiessen, in full flight from his gold-plated roots, had embarked on a remarkable career that would include literary fiction, nature writing, environmental activism and left-wing pamphleteering. Fifty years on, he has more than thirty books to his name, including *The Snow Leopard*, an account of his spiritual pilgrimage to the Crystal Mountain in northwestern Nepal; *Sal Si Puedes*, a chronicle of Cesar Chavez's advocacy on behalf of migrant farmworkers; *Oomingmak*, a record of his trip to Nunivak Island in the Bering Sea in search of rare musk ox calves; *Men's Lives*, an elegiac tribute to the beleaguered baymen of eastern Long Island; and *In The Spirit of Crazy Horse*, a 600-page defense of Leonard Peltier, which sparked an acrimonious seven-year legal battle from which Matthiessen and his publisher, Viking, emerged victorious. Matthiessen was recently awarded the National Book Award in fiction for his long-gestating novel *Shadow Country*.

In the 1960s, Matthiessen made a dramatic confession to his colleagues at *The Paris Review*: he had originally been sent to Paris by the CIA in 1950 and had used the fledgling journal as cover for his intelligence gathering. As Frances Stonor Saunders demonstrated in her deeply researched, muckraking book *The Cultural Cold War* (2000), the CIA, in a bold attempt to wean European and Third World intellectuals away from left-wing, anti-American ideology, provided funding for a considerable number of conferences, periodicals, exhibitions and concerts. It was a time when writers and intellectuals were not tenured professors but, in many cases, gladiators in the cold war. Matthiessen's contribution to that effort began at Yale, when he was recruited by professor Norman Holmes Pearson, a friend of W.H. Auden and Wallace Stevens and a veteran of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Matthiessen viewed it as the beginning of a great adventure: a CIA post would transport him to Paris, provide him with a regular paycheck and afford him the necessary leisure to write novels. It was a decision devoid of angst: he was all-American and apolitical, and the young CIA exuded romance; it had yet to fully set up shop in the cold war slaughterhouses of Iran, Guatemala and Chile. Today, few if any of Matthiessen's peers view the choice he made with rancor. "It was not an opprobrious thing," says Russ Hemenway in *George, Being George*. "Those of us who had been in World War Two realized that we had no intelligence service at all, just the OSS. So we were delighted with this thing they called the Central Intelligence Agency."



JESSE CLOSE

Peter Matthiessen in 2008

Matthiessen's affiliation with the agency has been public for many years. He was first unveiled as a CIA agent by the *New York Times*, which in 1977 published a formidable series about the agency's influence in the cultural sphere. (It remains unclear who gave Matthiessen's name to the *Times*.) His case was not widely discussed until 2006, when Doc Humes's daughter, Immy Humes, released a documentary about her father that highlighted the tensions that sprang up within *The Paris Review* around the question of Matthiessen's CIA past. Her film, *Doc*, aroused the interest of the *Times*. "I used The Paris Review as a cover, there's no question of that," Matthiessen told *Times* reporter Rachel Donadio in February 2008, "but the CIA had nothing to do with Paris Review."

But Matthiessen was thrown off balance by a revelation from Aldrich, which the latter shared with Donadio: a wealthy, shadowy cold war operative named Julius "Junkie" Fleischmann had provided $1,000 to *The Paris Review* in the journal's earliest days. (In a recent interview, Aldrich said this information came from a letter in the possession of Plimpton's widow.) Fleischmann was a major player in the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom, which helped to launch and sustain the London-based intellectual journal *Encounter* in 1953. In *The Cultural Cold War*, Stonor Saunders refers to him as "the CIA's most significant single front-man." These days, in the wake of Stonor Saunders's account, Matthiessen is not especially eager to be caught in Fleischmann's historical company, and in *George, Being George* he speculates that the $1,000 may have come from another Fleischmann—Raoul, the publisher of *The New Yorker*, who died in 1969.

Documents in the *Paris Review* archive, which are housed at the Morgan Library, reveal that the source of the $1,000 was indeed Julius and that Matthiessen solicited the contribution. The Morgan Library possesses a handwritten letter, on *Paris Review* stationery, from Matthiessen to Julius Fleischmann, who had been a friend of Matthiessen's parents. In the letter, which is undated but probably from 1952, Matthiessen wrote: "Here at last is a prospectus of the fine literary review I mentioned to you…it will be the best new literary quarterly since the TRANSITION of the Hemingway-Pound-Gertrude Stein era." Apparently, money from Fleischmann soon materialized. For decades Matthiessen has assiduously maintained that the CIA did not found or influence the fledgling *Paris Review*, but in *George, Being George* he yields some ground and admits that the $1,000 investment "muddies the picture a bit."

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How significant, really, was Fleischmann's contribution? In 1953, $1,000 was not an enormous amount of money, but neither was it an insignificant sum for a new, struggling literary magazine. Assuming Fleischmann's commitment was limited to $1,000, *The Paris Review* would likely have survived without it. It should be emphasized that the CIA and its front organizations never made a full-scale commitment to *The Paris Review*, as they did to *Encounter*. (Indeed, it was funding from the CIA and the British government that transformed *Encounter* into one of the world's most vibrant intellectual journals in the 1950s and '60s.) The CIA also supported other small publications, including *The Kenyon Review*, *Partisan Review*, *The Sewanee Review* and several foreign journals like *Transition*. *The Paris Review* never benefited from that largesse, and Plimpton's life was more stressful as a result: a survey of his voluminous correspondence at the Morgan Library reveals that he devoted a significant number of his waking hours, over many years, to the arduous task of fundraising. Cash was never plentiful: Larry Bensky recalls that in 1964–66, the years he staffed the Paris office of *The Paris Review*, the journal was operating on a shoestring.

In assessing the history of the journal, how consequential was its early liaison with the CIA? In light of the paucity of scholarly material, the person most qualified to make that assessment is Peter Matthiessen. If he believes the waters have been "muddied" by recent revelations, then he should endeavor to cleanse them. But over the years, and to this day, Matthiessen, who says he quit the CIA in disgust in 1953, has been tight-lipped. On those rare occasions when he has discussed this matter on the record—Aldrich's book being one of those occasions—his normally pellucid language becomes opaque. Coming from him, such reticence is disheartening. Since the late 1950s, Matthiessen has been an indefatigable activist and truth-teller. It's difficult to think of another major American writer who has devoted himself to such a wide range of causes, movements and struggles, many of which involve pressing ecological and environmental matters. The result is a body of work, much of which appeared in William Shawn's *New Yorker*, defined by political commitment, literary distinction, lived experience and action.

Matthiessen, who is 81, has yet to undertake a memoir, but the moment for him to clarify the origins of *The Paris Review* has arrived, even if the questions at stake are primarily of interest to cold war historians, aficionados of little magazines and devotees of Frances Stonor Saunders, and even if the subject matter arouses in him a degree of personal discomfort. Such a reckoning may well enlarge his reputation rather than diminish it. The questions he should answer include: Why, in *George Being George*, did he float the name of Raoul Fleischmann when Aldrich had already informed him that Julius Fleischmann was the actual *Paris Review* donor? (It's worth noting that Raoul's name is absent from Stonor Saunders's exhaustive and uncompromising account, while the book has many references to Julius.) Was Julius acting on his own behalf when he contributed that $1,000, or was he a conduit of funds from the US government? Did any of the other early donors, of whom there were at least eighteen, have direct (or indirect) ties to the CIA or its front organizations? As for Matthiessen, what did his CIA masters hope to achieve by allowing him to use the avowedly apolitical *Paris Review* as his "cover"? Were these the same men who backed *Encounter*, in which Julius Fleischmann was also a principal stockholder and which, like *The Paris Review*, was created in 1953? What were Matthiessen's duties as a CIA agent in Paris in the early days of the cold war, and what were the precise circumstances of his departure from the agency?

Matthiessen's silence and reticence about such matters would end up angering some of his *Paris Review* colleagues. Not until the 1960s did he inform them of the true origins of the journal: Plimpton got the news in 1963 and Doc Humes in 1967. (Regarding the delay in telling Doc, Matthiessen maintains that he didn't think Doc could handle the information.) During the research for her film, Immy Humes unearthed a letter from Doc to Plimpton written shortly after Doc had received Matthiessen's revelation about the CIA. As Immy Humes says in *George, Being George*:

> The letter from Doc was extraordinarily lucid for somebody who had literally lost his mind and was listening to implanted broadcasts from his furniture. He says he's going to resign from *The Paris Review* unless Peter goes public with his story—he's to be congratulated on coming out on all this, but he needs to write it in public in *The Saturday Evening Post* or, God help us, in *The Paris Review*. Peter never did.

Breaking the news to his old classmate Plimpton was perhaps more difficult. "I assured him," Matthiessen told Aldrich, "that I'd kept my two Paris activities strictly separate and that the *Review* had never been

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A cartoon by Whitney Darrow Jr. from the November 6, 1971, issue of *The New Yorker*

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contaminated by the CIA. Even so, he was shocked and very angry, understandably so. Who, after all, wants to hear that the 'love of his life,' as he himself would call it, had been conceived as a cover for another man's secret activities?"

Aldrich affirms in his editor's note that he modeled *George, Being George* on *Edie*, the classic oral biography of Edie Sedgwick that Jean Stein (mother of *The Nation*'s editor and publisher) and George Plimpton published in 1982. *Edie* is primarily Stein's book; Plimpton was brought in to edit and organize Stein's colossal stack of transcripts. Aldrich has chosen a steep mountain to scale. While *George, Being George* resembles *Edie* in form—pithy interview fragments, artfully arranged and configured, cascade down the page—the setting, tone and mood diverge considerably. *Edie* is about a privileged young woman's descent into the Warholian abyss, where bohemian eccentricity collided with the berserk. What has Aldrich discovered? That Plimpton had affairs with a slew of young women and attended orgies in Manhattan in the 1970s.

For the most part, there's no comparison between Plimpton's genteel milieu and the pandemonium of both the Factory and the psychiatric institutions that were a second home to Edie. And while *George, Being George* contains a stirring assemblage of voices (including Gore Vidal, Norman Mailer, Gay Talese and Harold Bloom), Aldrich's cast pales in comparison with Stein's dramatis personae: Capote, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, Jasper Johns and Warhol, to name a few. From these voices Stein and Plimpton sculpted passages that rise from the page and lodge in the mind. Ondine: "Those were the days I lived in Central Park. I'd wake up by the lakes and swim in them." Gerard Malanga: "Andy [Warhol] would also probably deny being high on LSD, yet I found him at six in the morning [on Fire Island] rummaging through the garbage cans." Henry Geldzahler: "When [Edie] was being paid less attention to, she didn't know who she was. That possibility of destruction was built into the weakness of her personality. We have to get used to the reality that we're alone. If you can't get used to it, then you go mad. And she went kind of mad." Nothing in Aldrich's book is quite so fine as these passages. But what ultimately distinguishes *Edie* from *George, Being George* is the stagecraft employed by Stein and Plimpton, the drama they created through the scrupulous arrangement of voices into a rich, structurally coherent montage; Aldrich's book is a less dynamic collection of skillfully orchestrated monologues. Still, aficionados of Plimpton, *The Paris Review*, the "quality lit set" and Manhattan's upper crust will savor Aldrich's book like a dry vodka martini.

Aldrich tells us that he wrestled with the chronology of Plimpton's life. It was more or less linear until George returned to Manhattan in 1955, at which point his days began to whirl into a carousel of assorted routines in which "chronology becomes almost irrelevant":

> There was the *Review* to edit and the staff to hang out with; games to play at the Racquet Club; books and articles to write for anyone who would pay for them; New York ceremonies to MC; girls to make love with; and always, from every direction, the endlessly seductive pull of friendship to respond to. The only big changes in his life that followed chronology were his marriages—which, notoriously, hardly changed anything in his life.

Some of the most illuminating sections of *George, Being George* concern the ongoing tension in Plimpton's life between his journalistic output, his stewardship of *The Paris Review* and his myriad social and financial obligations. Plimpton's literary career began auspiciously enough. In 1956 he launched a fruitful collaboration with *Sports Illustrated*; his first piece was about the "many-sided character" of Harold Vanderbilt and his success in the America's Cup. It was in the pages of *SI* that Plimpton launched his forays into professional baseball and football, which in turn led to *Out of My League* and *Paper Lion*. The former is sprightly but somewhat weightless; the latter, by contrast, demonstrated what Plimpton, at his most resolute, could accomplish at the typewriter. *Paper Lion* has vivid details, exuberant humor, a powerful narrative arc and a polished, sophisticated diction, all of which suggested a young craftsman pushing himself to the limit. His early books on sports were wildly popular: in 1970 *Time* reported combined sales of nearly 2 million copies.

But success on that scale was difficult to repeat in the 1970s and '80s. There were some fine books to come—*Shadow Box: An Amateur in the Ring*, which contains an uproarious account of his bout with Archie Moore, appeared in 1977—but Plimpton eventually found himself marginalized at *Sports Illustrated*, as the magazine became less accommodating to his idiosyncratic brand of personalized reporting. "His interests had changed, too," says former *SI* editor Myra Gelband in *George, Being George*. "He wasn't gonna go suit up and

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play football for us, and we weren't gonna run those kinds of stories."

His financial position (strained by marriage, children, club memberships, weekend homes and the barely solvent *Paris Review*) was not improving, and by the '80s much of Plimpton's income was derived from television commercials (for Carlsberg beer, Saab and Dry Dock Savings Bank, among others) and speechmaking, an endeavor in which he saw his fee sink from $20,000 per appearance at his apex in the '70s to less than $5,000 by the '90s. And the literary projects he undertook to pay the bills didn't always suit his talents: *D.V.*, his 1984 collaboration with Diana Vreeland, borders on hackwork. In a nation more enamored of stars than scribes, Plimpton the writer and editor was eventually transformed, in the public mind, into Plimpton the celebrity. Says Jonathan Dee, who worked at *The Paris Review* in the late '80s:

> The irony is that his whole "participatory" method was devised as a way to get a better picture of the *subject*—it wasn't supposed to be about George. But over time, and more or less against his will, his celebrity became such that it overshadowed whatever else he might have wanted you to get out of the story. His persona was his livelihood, and it was also a kind of trap for him. But then that happens to a lot of successful public figures. If you want to say he was complicit in it, I suppose it was only by reason of the extraordinarily hard time he had saying no.

As lucrative writing opportunities began to recede, Plimpton took refuge in "the love of his life." According to Marion Capron, who worked at *The Paris Review* in the 1950s, the journal became a crutch for Plimpton: "He didn't want nine to five. He didn't want a regular life, but he needed a calling card; he needed a peg to hang himself on." Matthiessen told Aldrich, with a sliver of derision, "He needed the magazine. *The Paris Review* was the armature for everything he did." A more equitable interpretation is offered by Plimpton's friend and editor Terry McDonell: "Deep in his heart the *Review* was the place he felt most comfortable, his spiritual hideout."

Was a 'Man Without Qualities' concealed beneath Plimpton's deeply amiable exterior?

Plimpton was on a ship in the Galápagos with Matthiessen and Jean Kennedy Smith in 2003 when a call came from New York: a publishing house had offered to pay $750,000 for Plimpton's memoirs. His friends were ecstatic: "He could have written a wonderful book on the manners and morals of his time and place and class," says Gerald Clarke. "George knew his world as Evelyn Waugh knew his." But Plimpton was chilled by the idea, telling his wife Sarah, "I don't want to do this. I've already written the stories of my life, what more is there to say? It's like putting the nails in the coffin." For Plimpton, it seemed that the adrenaline that enabled him to write *Paper Lion* and *Shadow Box* had dissipated with the years. At a private gathering in 1992, after the funeral of Doc Humes, Maggie Paley heard him utter, "I could have been a contender." Paley says: "Clearly to me he was saying 'If I hadn't done *The Paris Review*, I could have been a major writer.'" Norman Mailer had a different view: with his customary frankness, he told Aldrich that the gods denied Plimpton "a huge literary talent."

But maybe the gods weren't to blame. A subtheme winding its way through *George, Being George* is that underneath Plimpton's deeply amiable exterior was a person who sometimes came across as a Man Without Qualities. Says Oliver Broudy, a former colleague at *The Paris Review*: "I don't know that he knew who he was." For Plimpton to write a great book, says the literary agent Lynn Nesbit,

> He would have needed to *tell* it; he needed an audience. To write, to do great writing, you have to be alone, to have privacy, a private life. He was the most thoroughly social creature I've ever known. I think George experienced private life as a terrible deprivation; I think he would have preferred not to have one.

Or perhaps his writerly inclinations at that point were better suited to a more modest undertaking, a book on the order of *Lost Property: Memoirs & Confessions of a Bad Boy* (1991), Ben Sonnenberg's graceful account of his life as a hedonist and literary editor, or a collection of private jottings akin to his friend Kenneth Tynan's dark and enthralling *Diaries*. In 1993 Plimpton produced "Death in the Family," a learned essay about ornithology, for *The New York Review of Books*. Writing with melancholy and rage about the decimation of bird populations, he effortlessly chronicled the travails of the ivory-billed woodpecker, the whooping crane, the Micronesian kingfisher and Kirtland's warbler. Birds were a subject about which he felt strongly, and on which he might have written, if he so desired, a fine and valuable book.

The accumulated residue of years of high living—he had a fondness for alcohol, and he subsisted on a diet that his doctor described as "quite poor"—began to take a heavy toll on Plimpton in the '90s. "He went to the doctor a lot," his assistant says in *George, Being George*. "He seemed preoccupied with checkups." In 2003, while drinking at the bar of the Brook Club, Plimpton's blood pressure fell, and he collapsed on the floor. The paramedics recognized him and, while slapping his face, yelled, "Hey, George! Wake up!"—at which point the maitre d' turned to them and declared, "At the Brook Club, sir, we refer to him as Mr. Plimpton."

He had been ruminating about death for a long time. In 1977 *The New York Review of Books* published "The Last Laugh," in which Plimpton surveyed his writer friends about how they wished to die. Nowhere in Plimpton's *oeuvre* are the high-spirited and melancholy elements of his personality held in more perfect equipoise. "The Last Laugh" was inspired by a conversation he had with Norman Mailer in Kinshasa in 1974, when both men were covering the Muhammad Ali–George Foreman heavyweight title fight. Mailer affirmed that he would be content if a biographical note in the back of a high school anthology read: "Norman Mailer had been killed by an African lion near the banks of the Zaire in his fifty-first year." (Mailer's second choice: "Taken by a whale off Cape Cod in his fifty-first year.") Gore Vidal declared: "When I go, everyone goes with me. You are all figments of my waking dreams." And Plimpton's preference? "I usually saw myself 'shuffling off'…in Yankee Stadium…sometimes as a batter beaned by a villainous man with a beard, occasionally as an outfielder running into the monuments that once stood in deep center field… a slight crumpled figure against the grass."

It didn't exactly turn out that way, but Plimpton's good fortune sustained him to the end. On his last day, September 25, 2003, he taped a spot for Conan O'Brien, met with a fundraiser from Harvard, rehearsed for a play and embarked on his customary nocturnal rounds. Later that evening, after he had turned in, he shuffled off painlessly. "He died in his sleep from a catecholamine surge, resulting in sudden cardiac arrest," Dr. Denton Cox told Nelson Aldrich Jr. "For George it was an ideal way to go." ■

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BACK TALK

ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Jill Lepore and Jane Kamensky

Jill Lepore, a professor of history at Harvard, and Jane Kamensky, a professor of history at Brandeis, met as graduate students in the 1980s. In 2007, the two began to write a historical novel. The product of that collaboration, the occasionally racy *Blindspot* (Spiegel & Grau, $24.95), tells the story of the portrait painter Stewart Jameson and his apprentice, "Francis Weston," née Fanny Easton, the disguised daughter of a prominent Bostonian. Lepore and Kamensky compiled glossaries, consulted collections of urban slang and lifted freely from eighteenth-century sources. With each in charge of one narrator—Lepore wrote Jameson's chapters, Kamensky Easton's letters—the two volleyed passages back and forth, like "a tennis game." —*Christine Smallwood*

The book ends with one of the main characters boarding a ship for an adventure. That seems like a good opening for a sequel.

Lepore: It's not written for the sake of a sequel. The whole novel is a play on genre. There are seven different genres struggling for mastery. Is it a murder mystery? A love story? A political thriller? It's playing with the conventions of the genres invented in the eighteenth century: there are Gothic elements, and then there's the sublime. You don't need to get that to enjoy it, but it plays with all that, and so it's important to us that the ending be both conventional in a genre sense and also unconventional for the modern reader.

Kamensky: One of the ways in which it's as much a twentieth-century novel as an eighteenth-century novel is that the characters are struggling with their own conventionality in ways that they see and don't see. Ignatius Alexander [a highly educated fugitive slave] gets to be the one who comments on the ways that our narrators do and don't get to slip out of their emplotted lives. Eighteenth-century characters don't tend to break frame like that——

Lepore: Eighteenth-century characters do! There's this great moment at the end of *Northanger Abbey*. Do you remember this? It's from the end of the book, and something happens and Austen just turns to the reader and says, You may be wondering how this is all going to end, because there are so few pages left. Our ending, is it leading to a sequel? No. It's actually just playing with that self-consciousness about the book as an object. You've gotten to the end, but it's not really the end. It's not about *Blindspot 2*. It's more about the way Austen was funny.

Did you conceive of this as an explicitly feminist project? There's some role-playing with gender, and Fanny is a strong, bold character.

Kamensky: I think we wanted a set of questions about gender and genre that were true to the way we think about the past but also true to the past. So quite a lot of how Fanny questioned the boundaries of a woman's life could also be found by reading eighteenth-century letters. Masquerade is a key element of urban culture—for men more than for women—but there were women who dressed as men and fought in the Revolutionary War. And certainly the Enlightenment project broadly and the American Revolution particularly opened a lot of questions about who gets to be what, and why that remains the unresolved work of American democracy. Fanny's questioning of a woman's place and its limitations is very much a part of that eighteenth-century project. I think she comes to somewhat broader answers than most women would have dared.

Lepore: Our ambition was for the sensibility of our novel to have a kind of authenticity and fidelity to eighteenth-century sensibility. Fanny's proto-feminism, and similarly the stuff about race—to some readers, maybe that will feel tacked on or inauthentic because our American-heritage version of the early American past doesn't really spend much time dealing with those things in any thoughtful or rigorous way. But those debates really did happen. Boston was very much alive with the question of whether to abolish slavery while we're having this conversation about the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act. This could be the time; we could end slavery!

Can a novel tell history in a better way than a history book?

Kamensky: It's a different way. You know, all American historians talk about the incredible success of biographies of the founders—those men who dazzle us in part because they're such wonderfully knowable individuals. But they left huge historical records. The superb work that's been done on working-class people, on African-Americans in and out of slavery, on women, on children is inherently nonnarrative. People are known in the aggregate, not often through their names; or if it's through their names, it's a name in a city directory or an almshouse entry book. In a work of nonfiction you couldn't put ideas in those people's heads or words in those people's mouths. It would be almost an act of interpretive violence. In a novel we had the freedom to try to imagine those lives, not to make them eclipse the story of the Revolution but to put the novel equal and adjacent to stories that are more familiar to us.

What are other common misconceptions about the era?

Lepore: There's a politically worrisome dimension to enthusiasm about the founding fathers: Oh, those leaders were so much more virtuous than ours; what an age that was! To imagine that the nation was founded by a race of men so wholly unlike ourselves is to take us completely off the hook. It's actually about not demanding more of our democracy. It's about demanding less, because it buys into some kind of declensionist narrative. And I think that's somewhat insidious, so in *Blindspot* there's a lot of goofy irreverence. It's meant to suggest that ordinary people weren't necessarily sitting around, worshiping at the feet of the guy next door who had made a great speech in the assembly hall. ■

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JAMES HOLLIS/AACM

The Ameen Muhammad Ensemble in the 1990s

Jazz Is?

by FRANKLIN J. BRUNO

A Power Stronger Than Itself
The AACM and American Experimental Music.
By George E. Lewis.
Chicago. 676 pp. $35.

At an October 1965 meeting of Chicago's fledgling Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), saxophonist Jimmy Ellis was midway through a lecture on the importance to any "young jazz musician" of traditional forms and techniques, when pianist/composer Richard Abrams—later Muhal Richard Abrams—cut him short: "We're not really jazz musicians." Abrams and Ellis, born months apart in 1930, were respected members of the city's hard-bop community, well-connected players who might join Dexter Gordon or Max Roach on the bandstand when they passed through town. Many of the assembled "we" had come up similarly, learning their instruments at the feet of legendary high school bandleaders like DuSable's Captain Walter Dyett before paying their dues in the South Side's club scene (in decline by the 1960s) and after-hours cutting contests. If these weren't "jazz musicians," what did Abrams imagine they were?

Abrams's remark, while surprising, was not unprecedented. Though many musicians, then as now, have been untroubled by and even proud of the label "jazz," others have chafed against it, as when Charles Mingus complained to *Down Beat* that he and his contemporaries were "being forced to write music for the slipping of Mabel's girdle." For most of jazz's history, comparisons between jazz and the tradition of Western concert music labeled "classical" or "serious" have typically been rigged to favor the (master's) house. More recently, hip-hop and r&b–based pop have largely replaced jazz as objects of high-cultural scorn, and the music's most significant figures have won increased critical and institutional cachet. (Alex Ross's efforts, in *The Rest Is Noise*, to assimilate Duke Ellington into a broader narrative of twentieth-century composition is one recent and laudable example.) Even so, some musicians and writers continue to question whether the unwholesome connotations that adhere to "jazz"—the stank of the whorehouse, or at best the speakeasy—can ever be entirely washed away.

As an academic, currently at Columbia University, as well as a composing and improvising trombonist and computer musician active inside and outside the AACM since joining in 1971, George Lewis has faced these issues, and the struggles over cultural property and artistic respect that they reflect, from many sides. So it's telling that over the nearly 700 pages of *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, Lewis's massively polyphonic account of the AACM's forty-three years of activity, neither he nor his fellow members settle for long on a general term for their music. "Jazz and its offshoots," "jazz-identified music" (you can almost hear the scare quotes) and "post-jazz" appear at intervals, while the "American experimental music" of the subtitle is one of Lewis's stalking-horses, a tightly policed lineage of art-music, yoked to European models even in its seemingly radical, post-Cagean forms, "that would frame as axiomatic the permanent marginalization of African American agency," especially in the guise of improvisation. Even the 1977 proposal of the tag line "Great Black Music" proved divisive. While the Art Ensemble of Chicago's Roscoe Mitchell and others adopted this semiofficial descriptor on the grounds that "nobody was calling the music great," an equally prominent member, composer/omni-reedist Anthony Braxton, later dismissed the term as racist.

The lack of fixed terminology suggests the challenges of assembling the perspectives of so many individual and often temperamentally iconoclastic musicians, including Lewis's own, into a unified collective viewpoint. *A Power Stronger Than Itself* interspersed institutional history and theoretical reflections with capsule biographies, most based on original interviews, of more than fifty past and present AACM members. This material alone, rich with anecdote and social history, would be the stuff of great jazz (or "jazz-identified") historiography. It is also more accessible to the nonspecialist than the book's more conventionally academic passages, which, though

Franklin J. Bruno is the author of Elvis Costello's Armed Forces *(Continuum).*

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forcefully argued, lean heavily on the recondite language of cultural studies—more, a bit surprisingly, than on musicological description. Though some figures emerge as central, one of the book's great virtues is the generous space accorded to the voices and stories of younger musicians like flutist Nicole Mitchell, and to those little celebrated outside Chicago. The attention paid to such community builders as saxophonist/club owner Fred Anderson and trumpeter/administrator John Shenoy Jackson reflects Lewis's belief that "if you get written out of a history in which you were very evidently present, you can just write yourself back in."

The roots of that history lie in the Experimental Band, a rehearsal orchestra for Abrams's and others' new compositions, especially those unsuitable for mainstream club work. The group also gave younger players, including future Art Ensemble founders Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman, a chance to hear their music realized by working professionals. The Experimental Band's raison d'être was soon carried forward into a new group, intended as a mutual-aid society rather than a performing entity. The AACM found its name and direction in the South Side apartment of trumpeter Philip Cochran in May 1965, in meetings preserved on tape by a prescient Abrams. Pianist Jodie Christian saw early on that "the only jobs that we're gonna have where we can really perform original music are concerts that *we* promote, because the type of jobs that we're gonna get won't call for original music." To this end, members were expected to pay dues of a dollar a week, retain a majority of fellow members in their ensembles and assist in producing and promoting weekly concerts. In its nine-point statement of purpose, the organization also pledged "to increase mutual respect between creative artists and musical tradesmen (booking agents, managers, promoters, and instrument manufacturers, etc.)." Years later, Abrams added, "In that department, we found that the only way to create mutual respect…was for us to become both the artists and the tradesmen."

The political implications of the group's racial makeup emerged only gradually. Though the initial membership was overwhelmingly black, at least one white player, pianist Bob Dogan, attended the earliest meetings. Only when Dogan proposed to sponsor other white members of his working band did Abrams allow that "when we started, we didn't intend to have an interracial group." Lewis doesn't record how or when Dogan came to leave the AACM, but by October 1965, Malachi Favors could state, "We are in the midst of a revolution—when I say 'we,' I mean black people. When I came into the organization, I didn't know that it was this way…but I've accepted it." Even so, another white member, vibraphonist Gordon Emanuel (later Emanuel Cranshaw), who had appeared on Abrams's early recordings, was inducted in 1967, only to be voted out by an increasingly separatist membership two years later.

Jazz historians differ as to the AACM's militancy, from Alyn Shipton's contention that the like-minded Underground Musicians Association, based in Los Angeles, was "a far more overtly political organization… discussing racial and other issues in an open manner" to Ronald Radano's description of the group as a "particularly virulent, anti-Western, and, at moments, antiwhite organization." Lewis's nuanced account, while noting that the cultural nationalism of the Black Arts Movement was never an official policy, leaves no doubt about AACM's radical status as a self-constituted organization of working-class African-Americans fighting for creative and economic autonomy in what was by then one of the most segregated cities in the North—a city where, as late as 1966, Martin Luther King Jr. would cancel a march in suburban Cicero rather than expose supporters to the violence of counterdemonstrators.

Abrams's insistence on original composition was balanced with a strategic refusal to dictate what either "original" or "composition" might mean, or where the border between composition and improvisation might lie. This methodological freedom proved to be the AACM's great strength. Though the use of pan-ethnic "little instruments" as contrast or accompaniment to customary jazz instrumentation became a hallmark, the big tent of "original music" also sheltered former church organist Amina Claudine Myers's blues- and gospel-rooted piano/vocal performances; Anthony Braxton's traditionally notated orchestrations; explorations of graphic notation by Braxton, Leo Smith and others; and Henry Threadgill's recasting of Jelly Roll Morton and Scott Joplin with the sax/bass/drums trio Air. During a prolific European sojourn, the Art Ensemble of Chicago's output ranged from Lester Bowie's ironic appropriations of cornball early trumpet styles to the funky r&b stomp "Theme de Yoyo," sung with Aretha-sized conviction by Bowie's wife Fontella Bass several years after her still-familiar 1965 soul hit "Rescue Me."

Though nearly all this music found room

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for improvisation, hardly any resembled the self-consciously spontaneous "free jazz" that preceded it. (Bowie's comment is priceless: "The main difference is that we would stop.") Not all commentators welcomed the AACM's innovations, with work that partook of the structures and techniques of twentieth-century concert music coming under the heaviest fire. Amiri Baraka, whose understanding of Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor and post-*Ascension* Coltrane as the soundtrack to black revolution remains influential, derided the "imitation of certain aspects of contemporary European and white Euro-American music" and, Braxton in his sights, chastised an unnamed saxophonist who allegedly aped Berg, Webern and Stockhausen for the sake of "showing white folks how intelligent he (they) is." Lewis's response to Baraka's essentializing slurs is apt: "A conception of black cultural history that is forced to deny engagement with or influence from pan-European traditions would look absurd if it were applied to black writers or visual artists."

Lewis is rightfully impatient with musical analogues to the bad old 'one drop' rule.

Less concerned with whether white musicians can play jazz than with whether black ones are allowed to do anything else, Lewis is rightfully impatient with musical analogues to the bad old "one drop" rule, which allow critic John Rockwell to claim that white composer/improviser and sometime AACM fellow traveler John Zorn "transcends category" while writing of an equally multifarious black musician that "however much he may resist categories, Mr. Braxton's background is in jazz." As Abrams had it, however, "there are different types of black life, and therefore we know that there are different kinds of black music." The cash value of these differences is evident in disputes over arts funding from the 1970s on, when black composers working in and beyond jazz idioms began competing in earnest for support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation and like institutions. While the disparities in funding between (for instance) the NEA's classically oriented categories and its "jazz/folk/ethnic" catchall are striking, Lewis's most revealing point is not strictly economic. At mid-decade, "applicants in jazz composition were required to submit work samples comprising at least sixty-four bars of music, realized using common-practice European notation. In contrast, the NEA's 'classical' composition panel did not specify notation styles at all." By barring other approaches to harmony and structure, these strictures left many "jazz-identified" composers little choice but to submit to the tender mercies of entrenched (and predominantly white) academics who held the purse strings for "serious" music.

Abrams's presence on NEA peer-review panels helped crack the coffers later in the decade. NEA monies also stoked ill-starred efforts to incorporate the AACM into the 1980s, which led to the hiring of a salaried administrator but little actual programming. The advent of Jazz at Lincoln Center, capitalized in 1991 with $3.4 million from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, changed the game. As directed by Wynton Marsalis, its programs immediately became the elephant in the none-too-spacious room of institutionalized jazz. An elephant, moreover, with a selective memory: under the guidance of Stanley Crouch, Marsalis's narrow conception of "the tradition" sidelined most developments since 1960. For Lewis, this retrenchment marks a denial of the obvious: that the "classical" jazz of Armstrong, Ellington and Parker, among others, was no less the product of "exploration, discovery, and experiment" than the AACM's. In a sardonic footnote, Lewis drops all pretense of scholarly distance toward the revisionist view, as perpetuated by Ken Burns's *Jazz* series: "John Coltrane went mad in 1965, and a mysterious virus that he and others were carrying killed hundreds of musicians until Wynton Marsalis arrived in 1983, carrying a powerful mojo from the birthplace of jazz that put the deadly germ and its carriers to flight."

Ironies abound here. Earlier in Lewis's chronicle, Crouch makes an appearance as a none-too-swinging would-be drummer and musical director of a Bowery venue open to both the mainstream and the "out," a guise that may puzzle readers familiar only with his pronouncements, recently reprinted in *Considering Genius*, on such "irrefutable jazz fundamentals" as "4/4 swing, blues, the meditative ballad, and the Spanish tinge." Less amusing is Lewis's charge that, when Marsalis and Crouch were doling out gigs and commissions, their insistence on a pedigree merely mirrored decades of exclusionary gatekeeping within traditional and experimental Western classical music. No one at those South Side meetings thirty years earlier could have imagined that, in rejecting the label "jazz," they would someday find themselves cut off from the cultural capital—and work—that might come from embracing it.

Lewis is at his most moving, and least abstract, in a final chapter framed by a succession of funerals and memorials for AACM members who died during the book's ten-year gestation, including Bowie, Favors and veteran saxophonists John Stubblefield and Vandy Harris. A 2005 memorial at Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ for Harris, with whom Lewis had played thirty years earlier and who once proposed corporal punishment for infractions of AACM bylaws, occasions a performance by an intergenerational "Great Black Music Ensemble" and "Words of Comfort" from the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, who asks, according to Lewis, how "a political culture that claimed to be led by the Bible" could justify the invasion of Iraq. (Lest this cameo appear to tie Wright exclusively to the jazz avant-garde, it is worth noting that he also delivers a lengthy, Crouch-penned sermon on Marsalis's 1989 album *The Majesty of the Blues*.) The sustaining power of the AACM community is never more evident than in Lewis's account of these gatherings.

One of Lewis's strongest recordings is the 1993 CD *Changing With the Times*, which pairs his compositions with spoken material, including poems by Jerome Rothenberg and Quincy Troupe, as well as an autobiography written for an adult education class by his father, a retired postal worker. "Airplane," penned by the composer, tells of a coach flight during which the musician-narrator contends with an overly familiar white seatmate who takes his instrument case to mean "we're going to have some entertainment on this flight" and an attendant who blithely compliments his "Bill Cosby" sweater. Read by AACM-associated actor/vocalist Bernard Mixon, this monologue is backed by a pointedly un-"entertaining" assemblage of trombone, violin and chiming percussion—sounds that, one surmises, Lewis's interlocutors would be unlikely to recognize as the product of black artistry. The piece is witty, conceptually sophisticated and not notable for its charity. *A Power Stronger Than Itself* has a similar balance of strengths and shortcomings. But in bringing intellectual breadth and what Lester Bowie calls "good old country ass-kicking" to bear on past and present indignities, Lewis has produced a fitting companion to the music he celebrates, whatever one calls it. ■

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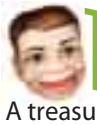

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ORGANIZATIONS

BERKELEY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group. prehend@gmail.com.

ASHEVILLE, NC, *Nation* discussion group forming. Contact mgibney@unca.edu.

BRENTWOOD, CALIF. New *Nation* discussion group forming. We'd like to start meetings soon. Contact ibhernandez2003@yahoo.com.

THE SPOKANE/INLAND NORTHWEST *Nation* discussion group: Gil Murray, (509) 999-4502; Box 293, Cheney, WA 99004; e-mail: gbmurray2@aol.com.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group meetings are starting up. Please e-mail loisaalbq@yahoo.com.

ORGANIZATIONS

SAN ANTONIO *Nation* discussion group. Second Mondays, Grady's Bar-B-Q at San Pedro and Jackson Keller. Contact lenwheeler@satx.rr.com for more information.

RICHMOND, VA, *Nation* discussion group seeks new members. Contact Wayne Young, (804) 232-8521, youngwayne88838@aol.com.

A NEW *NATION* UTAH YAHOO GROUP has been created at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/thenationutah. To join, contact Sam Evans, (801) 791-8089 or sameritech@yahoo.com.

A NEW MADISON (WIS.) *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP will be meeting one Sunday afternoon a month. Interested in participating? Contact Helen Aarli, h.aarli@earthlink.net or (608) 244-0787.

BOSTON AREA. *Nation* discussion group seeks new members! Please contact Sam Pilato, sam@alcove.arlington.ma.us, (781) 643-0038.

ROCK HILL/FORT MILL, SC, *Nation* discussion group forming. Contact addgroup@comporium.net.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group meetings are starting up. First meeting date: February 10. E-mail loisaalbq@yahoo.com.

POLITICAL ACTION

***NATION* STUDENT OUTREACH:** Attention student activists! If you're involved in organizing a progressive event, lecture or film festival on your campus or in your community and would like to distribute copies of *The Nation*, please let us know by calling (212) 209-5416.

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POSITIONS AVAILABLE

SOCIAL CHANGE JOBS. Weekly employment bulletin *Changeworks* (v2.0) covers progressive organizations across USA. Free sampling of job listings from latest issues at www.changeworks.org. (866) 276-7201.

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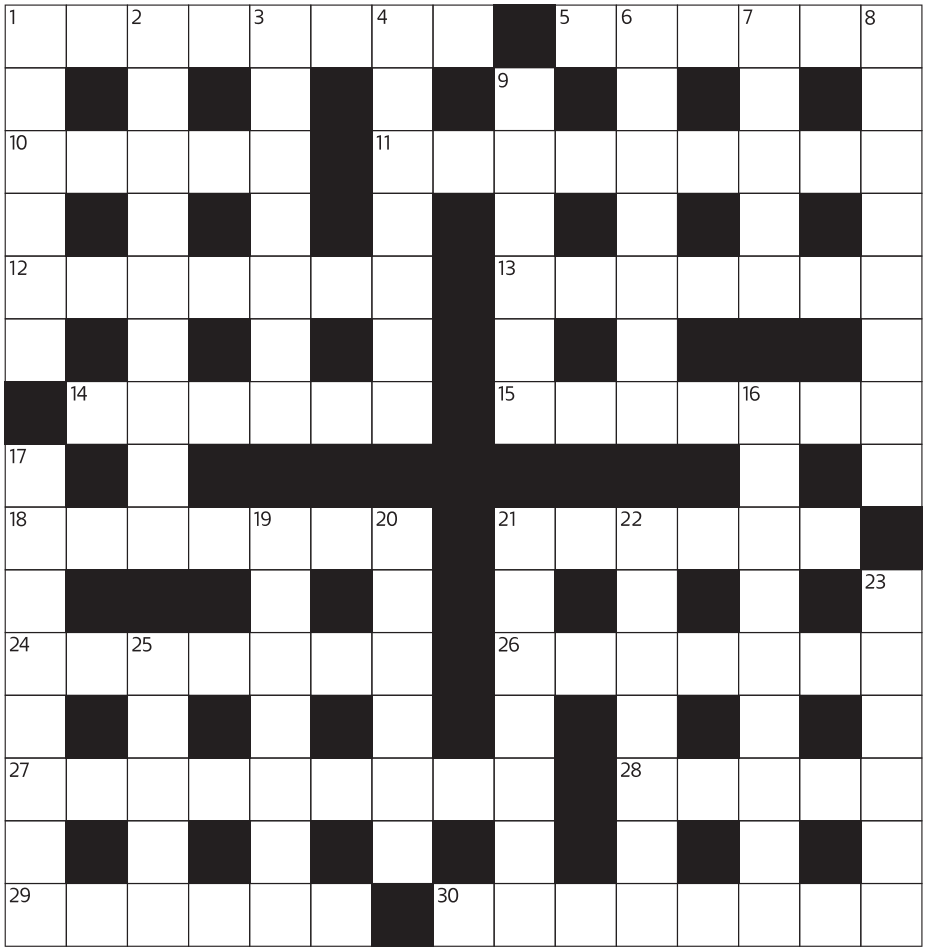
Puzzle No. 3154

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 What 5 across often calls. (4,4)

5 The childish verse said to go hippity-hop to see him. (6)

10 Goes lower and lower in places where things get scrubbed. (5)

11 Bad airs to let loose for the old philosopher. (9)

12 Asia is in a bad state about returning drink for the Asian warrior. (7)

13 Where Dobbin might be kept to put in something new. (7)

14 The type of computer found along a different route. (6)

15 See 28 across

18 Be a little droopy in the small country road—you'll find something good to eat here. (7)

21 Take a few steps—like in the one-horse type. (6)

24 Quite a tiff, deserving of an old-time arrow. (7)

26 Musician who is six to nothing on the roll. (7)

27 One dash over another—which might follow two times two. (5,4)

28 and **15** Putting the lawn where grain might be stored? Jumpers might be appropriate. (12)

29 Investigate: didn't he banish an ancient Egyptian? (6)

30 People who manage to stay away from work. (8)

DOWN

1 Is found in the so-called wild country, being the most knowing of all! (6)

2 Sort of torn about what some call you by, to a point—but they may be worn to make you pretty! (9)

3 One of two parts on the face of things, but nothing about the bad sort. (7)

4 Seeing right through you! (A bit of sunshine in the "crossing out" stage.) (1-6)

6 Puts something in the pot, but dinner is not on the mind of the person who does. (5,2)

7 Two, with a fellow called "the big crocodile," upheld apartheid. (5)

8 One has to have been in force, proably, in order for one to do so. (8)

9 Commonly a fiver to go with his sort, but it may be the last thing you do! (6)

16 An impotant time, with 99 in January 1, for instance—but you can wipe everything out this way. (9)

17 Quite capable of giving a good talking to you! (8)

19 Aging, or ill, as you can see, one is a large primate. (7)

20 Good to eat—but in a way I get clear around one. (6)

21 The day on which He quit work. (7)

22 One who keeps on working and working. (A woodsman needs direction first!) (7)

23 A state of equilibrium—it's as confused as it can be, to a point. (6)

25 One sounds adorable! But it's serious. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3153

A	R	T	I	C	L	E	S	■	B	A	T	T	L	E
N	■	H	■	H	■	N	■	P	■	R	■	R	■	L
C	O	R	D	O	V	A	■	R	A	M	P	A	G	E
H	■	O	■	I	■	M	■	O	■	E	■	P	■	C
O	F	W	A	R	■	E	■	P	E	D	I	E	N	T
R	■	■	■	L	■	L	■	E	■	■	■	Z	■	S
E	R	A	T	O	■	S	E	R	A	P	H	I	M	■
D	■	R	■	F	■	■	■	■	■	O	■	U	■	L
■	S	T	A	T	I	O	N	S	■	R	U	M	B	A
A	■	H	■	■	■	T	■	H	■	T	■	■	■	C
V	E	R	S	A	T	I	L	E	■	U	P	P	E	R
A	■	I	■	V	■	O	■	R	■	L	■	R	■	O
T	O	T	T	E	R	S	■	M	E	A	D	O	W	S
A	■	I	■	R	■	E	■	A	■	C	■	U	■	S
R	E	S	I	S	T	■	U	N	S	A	D	D	L	E

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National Civil Rights Museum.

When mostly black Memphis sanitation workers seeking a living wage launched a long and bitter strike in February 1968, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., brought his Poor People's Campaign to the racially polarized city in support of the strikers. At 6:01 P.M. on April 4 he was assassinated on the balcony of his room at the Lorraine Motel. Stained by King's murder, the Lorraine Motel went out of business. A foundation purchased it for conversion into the National Civil Rights Museum. 450 Mulberry Street, Memphis, TN 38103.

Sacco-Vanzetti Trail.

In death, two Italian immigrants became heroes of the working people. Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, a fishmonger and cobbler, had been convicted at an Alice in Wonderlandish trial before a prejudiced judge on mostly hearsay testimony. Their funeral procession along Boston's Hanover Street drew thousands of mourners. Sacco Venezetti Commemoration Society, 33 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111.

Women's Rights National Historical Park.

The park commemorates a single historical event, the First Women's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, July 1848. Visitor Center, 36 Fall Street, Seneca Falls, NY 13148

Edward Koren

Stonewall Inn.

It was a sweaty steamy night in June 1969; Judy Garland's funeral had taken place earlier that day. The police made one of their routine raids on the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village gay bar. Usually they'd encounter no resistance but not this time. The embattled gays and lesbians fought back with such vehemence that the cops had to lock themselves in the bar until a SWAT team freed them. A month later, the Gay Liberation Front was formed and the gay rights movement stepped out of the closet. 53 Christopher Street, New York, NY 10014.

Federal Correctional Institution, Ashland.

In June 1950, John Howard Lawson, screenwriter and first president of the Screen Writers' Guild, and Dalton Trumbo, novelist and screenwriter, each began serving one-year prison terms for refusing to testify at the 1947 HUAC hearings whether they belonged to the Communist Party. State Route 716, Ashland, KY 41105.

Find more inspiring travel suggestions in ***THE NATION GUIDE TO THE NATION*, your guide to the left in America from *The Nation* Magazine, America's biggest and leading political and cultural weekly. Telling the world since 1865.** By Richard Lingeman and the Editors of *The Nation*. Introduction by Victor Navasky and Katrina vanden Heuvel. Original Drawings by Edward Koren

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